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THE REMAINS

OF

THE REV. CHARLES HENRY WHARTON, D.D.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

BY

GEORGE WASHINGTON DOANE, D.D.,

BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW-JERSEY.

VOLUME I.

PHILADELPHIA:

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TO
THE VENERABLE,
THE PRESIDING BISHOP
OF
THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH
IN
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
THE PATRIARCH
OF OUR HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH,
THE RIGHT REV. WILLIAM WHITE, D. D.,
THESE REMAINS
OF ONE
WHO WAS FOR FIFTY YEARS HIS FRIEND,
ARE DEDICATED,
WITH SENTIMENTS OF FILIAL RESPECT AND LOVE,
BY
THE YOUNGEST OF HIS BRETHREN,
THE EDITOR.

BURLINGTON:

OCTOBER,

MDCCCXXXIII.

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MEMOIR.

FUNERAL SERMON.

APPENDIX.

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SELECTED PAPERS.

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PREFACE.

THE Remains of the Rev. Dr. Wharton, in addition to their literary and theological excellence, will commend themselves, for their author's sake, to a wide circle of companions and friends. Few men have lived more esteemed, or died more lamented, by the wise and good. The Editor esteems himself happy in the prospect of being associated in their regard with his respected and lamented friend.

When the present publication was undertaken, it was the confident expectation of the Editor, that Dr. Wharton's private papers would furnish materials for the fuller development and illustration of the earlier portions of his life. Application was also made to those of his relatives and friends who were thought most likely to possess information. In both these respects he has been disappointed, and very little has been obtained in addition to the matter from which the Sermon, preached on occasion of his death, was prepared. But the Memoir, though brief, will be interesting to those who knew its venerated subject. To *all*, it will present a singular and encouraging instance of the disenthralment of a vigorous mind and generous heart from the errors of inheritance and of education, by the simple power of truth; attested as to its entire singleness and purity of purpose by the kindness and charity which he always entertained, and habitually expressed, towards those from whose communion he had felt himself bound, in

conscience, to withdraw himself. To *all*, it will afford a beautiful illustration of the power of our religion to give consistency to all the pursuits and relations of life, serenity and cheerfulness to old age, and peace and joy in death.

The Sermons have been selected from many hundreds of equal excellence and interest. The number was limited by the limits prescribed to the volumes. Two pieces were selected from the theological and literary papers of the deceased, as illustrative of the extent of his research, the vigour and variety of his mind, and the felicity of his pen.

It is to the second volume, however, that the greatest importance will be attached. The pieces there contained have taken rank among the acknowledged authorities in that momentous controversy. The hope cannot but be expressed, that those who may follow Dr. Wharton in the same behalf, may emulate his diligence and accuracy in the acquisition of those stores of learning which it requires; his steadiness and skill in the conduct of the argument; his candour, calmness, and charity towards all who are of the contrary part. It is thus alone that they can secure, as he did, the respect and esteem even of those from whom they are compelled to differ. It is thus alone that their writings can survive the occasion which has produced them, and attain the dignity and permanence of standard theology. It is thus alone that they can defend, by valour and firmness, the citadel of Christianity, without the risk of injury to the high interests of peace and charity. The secret of their success they will find, as he found it, in the Apostle's rule,—“speaking the TRUTH in LOVE.”

MEMOIR.



MEMOIR.

THE subject of this Memoir had outlived nearly all his contemporaries. His characteristic humility was unfortunately suffered to prevent the record of those events, and of that long experience, which must have teemed with instruction for those who came after. Accident, or the want of proper care, had led to the loss or destruction of papers, which might have thrown light upon periods to which the memory of no survivor reaches. Upon a single point, at least, the change of religious opinion, this deficiency is to be regretted. Had the opportunity been afforded, the writer of this notice was to have received from the hand of his venerated brother, a detailed narrative of this interesting passage in his life. The failure of this intention is the less to be lamented, as the first of the Tracts which compose the second volume, so happily portrays the feelings and convictions by which it was preceded, and accompanied. A more calm, temperate, dignified, and *Christian* paper, is not to be found in the annals of religious controversy. And if there were no other evidence, this might be appealed to, and relied on, as demonstrative, at once, of the philosophic spirit and evangelical temper, in which an inquiry, involving considera-

tions so momentous, was prosecuted to its final issue. The fragment, quite too brief, which follows, is the only record which has been discovered of a life extended far beyond the ordinary span ; and can be read by no one without regret that the same exquisite pen had not brought down the record to its close. It is in the handwriting of the deceased, was evidently of recent composition, and terminates, as will be seen, abruptly.

“In compliance with the earnest and repeated wishes of one* whom, for a quarter of a century past, it has been my constant desire, as well as duty, to gratify, I sit down to write a short sketch of a pretty long life, which will probably be little interesting to any person but herself. To the writer, however, many recollections of the years that are past, and of the situations in which he has been, may be of essential service in creating in his own heart, a more lively and grateful sense of the many providential incidents which have marked his little history, from his birth to the present day.

“I was born in St. Mary’s county, in the province, now the state, of Maryland, on the 25th day of May, O. S.† in the year 1748. The family plantation is called Notley Hall. It had been the residence of a Governor of that name ; and was presented to my grandfather by Lord Baltimore, towards the close of the 17th century. From him, it descended to my father, Jesse

* His wife, who still survives him.

† Answering to our 5th of June.

Wharton; and, at his death in 1754, it became my property, and continued so until I took orders in the Roman Catholic Church, and then I conveyed it to my brother,*—after whose death it became the property of his son, C. H. Wharton, now residing in Washington. My mother was Anne Bradford, descended, like my father, from one of the respectable and first settlers in the province. She was a woman of sweet manners and of uncommon beauty: and many of her maternal precepts and tender caresses are still fresh in my memory, and frequently present her dear image to my mind. I was put first to a mistress, and then to a very competent school-master in the neighbourhood—so that when it was determined that I should be sent to St. Omers, in 1760, I could read and write tolerably well, and was fonder of my book than boys at that age generally are. One signal instance of a protecting Providence, which I well remember, occurred before I left home. Being one day with my father at the house of his overseer, I was amusing myself with shooting a cornstalk about the yard, when a very large and fierce dog standing over it, I attempted to drive him away. He immediately threw me down, and had torn off part of the scalp from my head, when my father perceived my danger, and seizing a loaded gun which stood behind

* Some time after Dr. Wharton had renounced the communion of the Church of Rome, it was discovered that the conveyance was not complete. It was promptly and cheerfully re-conveyed, and an estate of considerable value, the chief of his patrimony, given the second time to a younger brother.

the door, shot the dog while he stood over me, and left me untouched. I was then about seven years old, and my dear father died shortly after.

“In the year 1760, I was sent to the Jesuits’ College at St. Omers, a seminary at that time very deservedly celebrated for teaching the Greek and Latin classics with great accuracy, and for its strict discipline in all literary and religious duties. The students at that time amounted to more than a hundred, and were divided into six schools or classes, under that number of preceptors, to each one of whom was assigned one of the schools, to be taught by him for six years, from the first rudiments of a classical education, to the theory and practice of rhetorical compositions. The schools were denominated *Little-figures*, *Rudiments*, *Grammar*, *Syntax*, *Poetry*, and *Rhetoric*. My master, or preceptor, was the Rev. Edward Walsh, to whom, as a most amiable and affectionate man, as well as a good classical scholar, I was attached by the most unlimited confidence, and the warmest sentiments of gratitude and love, which I shall never cease to cherish.* At the end of two years, the college at St. Omers was broken up by the banishment of the Jesuits from all the French dominions.† For this most iniquitous and tyran-

* I have in my possession, by the gift of Mrs. Wharton, a Latin copy of the ‘Imitation of Christ,’ which had been for seventy years Dr. Wharton’s daily companion. It has his name on a blank page, written at Bruges, May, 26, 1763, as “the gift of the Rev. Father Edward Walsh, his most beloved preceptor.”

† The following singular passage, which may almost be called a predication, extracted from a sermon preached in Christ Church, Dublin, by Dr.

nical measure, I could never discover any plausible pretext, unless, indeed, it was their unlimited devotedness to the Roman Court and Church. This, I know, was the ostensible ground of their banishment; but its real motive lay much deeper: for the spirit of infidelity was working powerfully in France at this time, which afterwards burst out in the enormities of the revolution. Against this spirit, the Jesuits came forward with great zeal, and while Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius, and a host of other infidel writers, were labouring to *crush* what they termed the *monster* of revealed religion, they met with such powerful opponents among the

George Brown, Bishop of that See, in 1551, I find copied into a little book of extracts, in the hand-writing of Dr. Wharton. "But there are a new fraternity of late sprung up, who call themselves Jesuits, which will deceive many; who are much after the Scribes and Pharisees' manner. Among the Jews they shall strive to abolish the truth, and shall come very near to do it. For these sorts will turn themselves into several forms; with the heathens a Heathenist, with the Atheist an Atheist, with the Jews a Jew, with the Reformers a Reformed"—(here the good Bishop seems to have forgotten that many Jesuits chose rather to suffer the most cruel deaths, than to become either Heathens or Protestants)—"purposely to know your intentions, your minds, your hearts, and your inclinations, and thereby bring you at last to be like the fool, that *said in his heart there was no God*. They shall spread over the whole world, *shall be admitted into the councils of princes, and they never the wiser*; charming of them, yea, making your princes reveal their hearts and the secrets therein, and yet they not perceive it; which will happen from falling from the law of God, by neglect of fulfilling the law of God, and by winking at their sins; yet in the end, God, to justify his law, *shall suddenly cut off this Society, even by the hands of those who have most succoured them, and made use of them*; so that at the end, they shall become odious to all nations. They shall be worse than Jews, having no resting place upon earth, and then shall a Jew have more favour than a Jesuit."

Jesuits, that nothing short of the abolition of that order could promise them success. The order was accordingly suppressed a few years after, by a temporizing Friar,* who had been raised to the Popedom by the most palpable intrigues, and was induced by allegations the most unfounded and contradictory, to dissolve a religious body, which Monks and Friars of every denomination had long regarded with jealous and envious eyes. As the champions of revealed religion, they have always been detested and calumniated by philosophical infidels; while Protestants must rejoice in their fall from their having been, (as the old king of Prussia styled them,) “the life-guards of the Pope,” and the inveterate enemies of the Reformation. Having long ago renounced those discriminating doctrines of the Romish Church, which the Jesuits were always foremost in defending by their writings, enforcing in their Colleges, and recommending by the strictness of their moral and regular conduct,† I cannot be considered as an apologist of

* Ganganelli.

† The manuscript volume before alluded to, contains also the following extract. I do not know the author:—

THE JESUITS.

— A Society, which raised on powerful, but unnatural principles, and supported by an early and correspondent education, became first the wonder, then the terror of the Christian world; asserting rights independent of civil government; and possessed of art to elude, or influence to defy it. Their patron first carried the flambeau of enthusiasm through the colleges he founded. Worldly ambition he had none; aiming only at the mistaken glory of his Maker. But as time and succession gave entrance to men of far different genius, then it was that worldly ambition began to build her

that Society, by acknowledging that among many superstitious observances, unscriptural tenets, and unfounded legends, they endeavoured to lay the foundations of strict morality, nay, of Christian piety, in the minds of the youths who were entrusted to their care ; and as to myself, I feel a pleasure in the indulgence of recollections, that at that early period of my life, many great principles of religion were planted in my mind, which, when afterwards depurated from all extraneous matter, have continued to be the guides of my religious conduct, and my support. These grateful feelings to my early instructors, I shall ever cherish, and the expression of them at this time, I trust, will be readily excused ; since an unequivocal symptom of sincerity in abandoning a system of religious opinions must appear,

views on the enthusiastic visions of Ignatius of Loyola. Thus, while their leaders are guided by worldly policy, their subalterns are actuated by enthusiastic zeal. By the most unbounded influence of command and obedience, which their education naturally produces, self-love thus compasses its ends by the means of generous prejudices. Formed for external command by the power of internal obedience : perverting private harmony into the instrument of public discord. Their virtue overrated by some : their faults by others. Not void of wisdom, nor yet of charity : yet their wisdom often foolish and their charity cruel. Destined to form and overturn empires ; propitious to barbarous tribes, whom they could entrust and rule ; fatal to established states, whom they must rule or destroy. Assuming the most contradictory shapes, while actuated by unvarying self-consistent principles. Princes in Italy ; rebels in Portugal ; statesmen in Spain ; spies in England ; assassins in France ; martyrs in Siam ; traders at Canton ; talapoins in India ; courtiers at Peking ; savages in Canada ; in Europe, the enemies of their species ; in Paraguay, the friends and legislators of mankind."

in retaining an affectionate and Christian regard for those who deem it their duty to maintain them.*

“In 1763, the English College was broken up at St. Omers, and the officers, teachers and scholars retired to the city of Bruges in Flanders, where they received the protection and encouragement of the Austrian government. It was there that I completed my classical education under the instruction and tuition of my beloved master, Mr. Walsh. Sequestered from all society beyond the walls of the College, and of course a total stranger to every thing unconnected with the strictest discipline in acquiring classical attainments, and those habits of devotion, which were deemed essential to a Roman Catholic youth, I applied myself very diligently

* Dr. Wharton was always anxious that equal justice should be done to the order of which he was once a member, and to which he always acknowledged himself indebted for so much. It is probably in reply to something of this kind, that an ingenious correspondent (1818) thus writes to him. “To abuse the Jesuits is popular, and has accorded with state policy in England since the time of Elizabeth, and in other parts of Europe since the suppression of the order. I shall be happy to find that they do not deserve the obloquy which has been heaped on them. But, my dear Sir, had they not an *esoteric* and *exoteric* morality? And might you not have been considered too honest and virtuous to be entrusted with their secrets? What think you of the ‘*Secreta Monita*?’ You will oblige me by referring me to such works as will put that matter in a proper light. Do you remember *l’Adieux aux Jesuits*’ de Gresset?”

‘ Car ne les crois pas tels que la main d’envie,
 Les peint a des yeux prevenus ;
 Si tu ne les connais que sur ce qu’en publie
 La tenebreuse calomnie
 Ils te sont encore inconnus.’ ”

to my studies, and became prominent among my associates, in a very accurate knowledge of the Latin language, which became nearly as familiar as English, as we were obliged to converse in it during our ordinary relaxations from our studies."

Of the period intervening between 1763, when young Wharton removed to Bruges, and 1770, when we find him a student at Liege, there is no record.—An Academic paper is before me, purporting to be conclusions in philosophy,* defended in the English College of Jesuits, at Liege, in 1770, before the Reverend Father, P. Rodolphus Booth, Professor of Philosophy, by Charles Wharton, and Herman Kemper, of that society. It includes propositions in logic, metaphysics, and physics, and presupposes in its *defenders* an extent and an accuracy of knowledge highly creditable to the institution and to the times. Among the topics in natural philosophy, the general laws of motion, as laid down by Newton, ("clarissimo Newtono,") the attraction of gravitation, the Copernican system, the nature of light, the principles of acoustics, &c. &c. find place. The whole

* The title is as follows: "Conclusiones ex universa philosophia, propugnandæ in Collegio Anglicano Societatis JESU, Leodii, Anno Domini, M, DCC, LXX, præside reverendo Patre P. Rodulpho Booth, Societatis JESU, Philosophiæ Professore,—defendent Carolus Wharton, Hermannus Kemper, ejusdem Societatis, mense Julio, die 17, hora 9 ante, and 3 post meridiem. Ex officina viduæ S. Bourguignon, SUÆ CELSITUDINIS Typog. Cum approbatione et superiorum permissu." A MS. Book of Algebraic questions and solutions, in his hand, begins with this inscription, "Ad majorem Dei Deiparæq gloriæ,"—to the glory of God and the Virgin!

is concluded with an ascription, declaring it to be for the greater glory of God, the Virgin, ("*Deiparæ*,") and the Saints, Ignatius and Xavier !

His own entries in a small copy of the Liege Almanac for the year 1772, enable me to fix accurately the date of his admission to orders as deacon and as priest,—the former being June 13, the latter, September 19, of that year, the 24th year of his age. His letters of orders are also in my possession, as also is a paper of demonstrations in elementary geometry, defended in July, 1773, before the Reverend Father Charles Wharton, Professor of Mathematics in the English Jesuit College at Liege,—the ascription of glory being still the same, to God, the Virgin, and the Saints, Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier !

We find him next residing at Worcester, England, as Chaplain to the Roman Catholics of that city. When this residence commenced cannot be determined. The first of a series of letters addressed to him at that place, and continued until the time of his departure for America, is dated in March, 1777. The letters* were written by a fellow countryman, in the confidence and employment of the British Government ; and evince in both of them an ardent love of civil liberty, and a deep and glowing sympathy with their brethren in America, who were engaged in that desperate struggle by which its triumphs were achieved. A prominent subject of this

* One of the series was franked by John Wilkes, another by David Hartley.

correspondence was the publication, for the benefit of the American prisoners, of a "Poetical Epistle" to General Washington, of which the subject of our memoir was the author. There was much detail in the letters as to the negotiation with the printers, and some other incidents noted of greater and more general interest.— In a letter dated Nov. 2, 1778, his correspondent writes, "there have been two criticisms on the poem,—the first by the pencil-marker, and writer of the enclosed note; the other by the celebrated Persian Jones.* His observations are enclosed, and I think from them you may alter it to advantage. I have at last got a print from P—s† of G. W——,‡ a tolerably good likeness; but as it is a front face, and only of bust size, I got W——§ to promise to make a full length drawing, in order to get a print engraved; but the artists in that way," he adds with amusing honesty, "ask such a confounded deal of money, that I doubt if my finances will allow me to get it struck off." In a later letter, (14th April, 1779,) he writes,—"I am inclined to think if this is done,"—the poem published, with a life and character of General Washington,— "and a proper dedication to some distinguished personage, (suppose the Duchess of Devonshire, for she particularly distinguishes him as a toast at her table,) it may sell for half a crown or two shillings. Mr. West has formerly seen General Washington, and I

* Sir William Jones. † Paris. ‡ General Washington.

§ The afterwards distinguished painter West, then, as appears from other letters, working hard for his distinction.

think, with my recollection of him and description of his face, a drawing may be made tolerably like him, so that a small full length may be got for the frontispiece of a quarto edition. I have spoken to West about it, but he cannot think of any thing else but two pictures he is finishing for the exhibition, which opens the 24th instant." Farther down he says,—“think also of a dedication. The Duchess has befriended the American prisoners, and the mention that the poem is published solely to raise a little money for our imprisoned brethren, whose distresses have been very great, may lead to a good sale of the book.” I have not been able to find a copy of this publication, though much inquiry for it has been made. From one of the manuscript copies found among the papers of the author, the English publication seems to have been a re-print from an edition printed in Philadelphia, in 1778, by J. Bradford. But this opinion I have not been able to substantiate. Whatever may be thought of its poetical merits, the benevolent purpose for which it was published must commend it to the general favour. Some extracts from it will be found at the close of this memoir.*

But a subject of much greater importance, which at this period engaged his mind and heart, was the change in his religious opinions. There are two letters in the correspondence above alluded to, which refer to this subject. In the former of the two, which unfortunately has no date, his correspondent writes, “I do not know

* See Appendix No. I.

what to say or do about the other parts of your letter, relative to the present uneasy situation of yourself and your opinions. I would go on as well as I could for a little longer, and wait the event of getting safely home, and then seeing how matters stand. I can feel exactly what you express. It is safe with me, and nothing shall be wanting in my power to aid and help you." On the 25th of July, 1782, he writes again, probably in reference to this letter,—“I cannot accuse myself of neglecting to answer any questions you put to me as to matters concerning yourself. There was indeed a mention, *in an old letter*, that your *situation and feelings as to religious points were uneasy to you*. It is as much out of my power to mend your situation, as it is to advise you on the latter point. I can easily guess what you feel, and I dare say *your feelings are the dictates of an honourable and upright heart*.”

None who knew Dr. Wharton could doubt this for a moment. A simpler and more guileless spirit seldom can be found. To know the truth and not to follow it,—to have a glimpse of its fair beauty, and not to seek, even with utmost agony of effort, the full and open vision, was not in his frank and honest nature. How judicious he was in his discrimination of the good from the evil, in parties or in persons, and how perfectly sincere and candid he was in calling the good *good*, and the evil *evil*, has been seen in the testimony which, even to the last, he continued to bear to the merits and services of the Society of Jesuits. It was in truth a moral phenomenon,

which many could not comprehend, and some could scarcely credit. Yet it was truly so; and it seems to have been the working of this honest love of the truth and hearty determination to follow it whithersoever it might lead, which set him first to a candid Scriptural examination of the Church of his fathers, at whose altars he had been admitted to serve. At Worcester, he was brought into association with many excellent families. He found in them what he could not doubt were the genuine "fruits of the Spirit." They were Christians in deed and in truth. Yet they were Protestants, and, by the doctrine of his Church, heretics. They were without the pale of that fold, within which alone there is salvation.* The question of his meek and honest heart was, How can these things be? Further intercourse and more intimate observation increased the perplexity of his mind. Even to doubt the authority of the Church to decide infallibly in this and in all other cases was sin. Yet to resist the strong convictions of his conscience, guided by Scripture—to reject the clear, shining of the light within—that, surely, must be also sin. He was afraid to inquire, and yet afraid not to inquire. To disregard the *dictum* of the Church was to deny the faith;† and yet to receive it, was to resist the first

* See the Creed of Pope Pius IV.

† "There is a doctrine concerning the Sacraments," says Bishop White, "that they impress physical characters on the souls of the recipients. It is known by the name of '*Opus Operatum*.' This, as it relates to baptism, may be seen in a controversy between Bishop Bossuet and Mons. Claude, a protestant divine of France, as edited by the late Charles Butler, Esq. a Roman

and strongest impulses of that charity which is greater, even, than faith. He has told me that the mental suffering which he then underwent was keen and severe, beyond the power of description or conception. It preyed upon a frame enfeebled and exhausted by vigils and by study, with a spiritual excruciation, of which the rack of the inquisitor was but a feeble emblem. It

Catholic gentleman of the English bar, high in esteem with the people of his communion. On every point of the debate the Bishop holds up the authority of the Church, as not to be questioned in any particular by the private judgment of any member of the communion. Mons. Claude pleads, that at the least, an inquirer after truth may seek to satisfy himself that the Church has been vested with the prerogative assumed on the one hand and contradicted on the other. This the Bishop will not consent to; because, as he says, baptism has impressed the essentials of the Christian Creed, and the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, so that *the admission of doubt is incipient apostacy.*" "It is evident that the dogma in question must be powerfully operative in retarding the adherence of young persons advancing to maturity. Should doubt occur to any of them, the thought of the tremendous danger in prospect, cannot but be unfavourable to compliance with the counsel—be ready always to give a reason of the hope that is in you. The difference may be illustrated in the case of the late Rev. Dr. Wharton.—According to the account given of this estimable divine, in the sermon of Bishop Doane, commemorative of him, and agreeable to information received from him in his last illness; when in the course of his studies, the errors of the Roman Catholic Church began to open on him, it was attended by much agitation of mind: the effect, we must suppose, of a cherished apprehension of the consequences of the least grade of doubt. This hindrance of information is removed by the dismissal of the said pretence of a physical operation, which is neither provable from Scripture, nor consistent with our observation of human nature."—*Appendix to an argument in favour of Revelation.*—The controversy above alluded to is found in the life of Bossuet, by Charles Butler, Esq.

may be doubted whether his nervous system ever recovered from the shock. In such a struggle, nature, unassisted, must have failed and fallen. But Wharton's was a religious spirit. Meek, humble, docile,—it is to such as he was that God reveals his truth. “The secret of the Lord, is with them that fear him.” He was willing to do God's will, and the promise was fulfilled in him that he should “know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” He searched the Scriptures whether these things were so. He invoked upon the search the guidance of that true wisdom which is from above. He persevered in the pious labour, and was rewarded with the full revelation of the “truth as it is in Jesus.” Of the steps of this most interesting process there remains no record, except as it was unfolded in conversations, far too few and brief, held with the editor during the short intercourse with his lamented brother which it was permitted him to enjoy. The substance of them is stated above.

But however little may be known of the progress,* the clear and satisfactory conclusion is fully

* Since writing the above, the opinions thus expressed have been most powerfully confirmed by the following passage of “An Appeal to Scripture, reason, and tradition, in support of the doctrines contained in a letter to the Roman Catholics of the city of Worcester, from the late Chaplain of that Society.” It was written by the Rev. John Hawkins, who having been a Romish priest, had renounced the communion of the Church of Rome, and had attached himself to that of the Church of England. In addition to the advantage thus afforded him for understanding this matter, he was the friend and correspondent of Dr. Wharton. “The only just inference to be drawn from this part of Mr. Wharton's account of the rise and progress of his in-

and strongly before us. The "Letter to the Roman Catholics of the city of Worcester" has been regarded, on both sides of the Atlantic, as a master-piece in religious polemics. So peaceable and gentle is its spirit, that the term *polemics* seems scarcely suited to its character. Sound in argument, clear in its statements, immoveable in its conclusions, it is yet, in its allowance of others, imbued with the most tender charity, and in its tone and temper a very breathing of the spirit of the peaceful Jesus. If few could resist the force of its logic, none could be offended by the mildness and moderation with

vestigation or conviction is, that for many years he had been a bigoted member of the Church of Rome, intimately convinced that, out of this Church (whether with justice or not, is not here the question,) no one could be saved; and consequently persuaded in his mind, that all Protestants were in general insincere and vicious, slaves to prejudice, and walking with a feigned security in the ways of perdition. By degrees, as he became more intimately acquainted with them, he was admitted to a nearer view of the purity both of their lives and doctrines, which he had only seen before through the medium of prepossession: and could no longer believe that those whom the most amiable qualities of heart rendered dear to him, were the objects of eternal disregard and reprobation, merely because they would not submit to the claims of a Church which assumed an authority to which she had no just pretence. This he knew to be the only motive of their dissent. He therefore began seriously to examine whether he had not himself been imposed upon in his early days, and whether this doctrine of blind obedience was that of Revelation. Upon mature inquiry he could not discover that this belief was founded on the word of God. Conceiving upon this, that he had been misled when incapable of judging for himself, he dismissed his former creed, and associated himself to that part of the Christian Church, the religion of which he esteemed most rational and pure. This is indisputably the order of his convictions, and the result of his researches."—*Appeal*, pp. 22, 23.

which its arguments were urged. Though some might regret the determination at which its author had arrived, all would rejoice that in making it he had maintained the dignity of a gentleman, the elegance of a scholar, and the candour and charity of a Christian.

The last letter which I have been able to find of the correspondence before alluded to, bears date in March, 1783. It has reference to the mode of his return to America. The record of his oath of allegiance to the government of his native state, from which it declares him to have been absent about twenty years, is before me, and is dated June 10th, 1783. The place of his residence for the year ensuing, and the estimate formed of him by his neighbours and associates, will appear from the testimonial which, on his removal, they presented to him.*

* "These are to certify, that the Rev. Charles Henry Wharton, a native of St. Mary's county, in the state of Maryland, and descended from a very genteel and respectable family,—ever since he arrived from Europe, (whither, when very young, he was sent for the benefit of his education,) has resided at his seat in this neighbourhood, for these twelve months last past; during which time, his life and conversation, as a Christian, have been irreproachable and exemplary, while the easiness and affability of his deportment, as a gentleman, have, very deservedly, gained him the esteem and affection of the sensible, the cool, and thinking part of the professors of every denomination; who, unfettered by the prejudices of education, dare to exert that most valuable prerogative of human nature, the liberty of thinking and judging for themselves. In justice, therefore, to real merit, we, the subscribers, unasked, and unsolicited, do freely and voluntarily, from a conviction of the rectitude and integrity of his heart, and of his general usefulness to society, both as a minister of the Gospel of Christ, and as a scholar, present him, at his removal

In May, 1784, Dr. Wharton visited Philadelphia, for the purpose of publishing his letter to the Roman Catholics. It was made the subject of a pamphlet by his kinsman, Mr., afterwards Archbishop Carroll, under the title of "An Address to the Roman Catholics of the United States of America; by a Catholic Clergyman." To this, Dr. Wharton published an answer, entitled "A Reply to an Address to the Roman Catholics of the United States of America; by the Author of a Letter to the Roman Catholics of the city of Worcester." Of these tracts, collected in 1817, (with two others,) in one volume, a writer in the "British Review," (the Rev. Thomas Hartwell Horne,) thus speaks: "The Letter is the first tract in the volume now under consideration, and is characterized by just arguments and a truly liberal spirit. To counteract the effects which might be produced by it in America, the late Roman Catholic Archbishop, Carroll, published a reply, in which he defends the principles of his Church with erudition, and endeavours to answer Dr. Wharton's objections with politeness. The latter produced an answer to the Archbishop's reply, in which he has completely

from this settlement, with this small testimony of our esteem and regard.—
Given under our hands, this 26th day of July, 1784.

JEREMIAH JORDAN,
RICHARD BARNES,
J. A. THOMAS,
PHILIP KEY,
GEO. SLAIDE,
GEORGE GOLDIE,
JOHN LLEWELLEN."

vindicated the Protestant faith, with equal ability and learning." The re-publication was made in consequence of repeated applications to the author. It had extensive and rapid circulation, and has been long since out of the bookseller's hands. The union of Archbishop Carroll's pamphlet with his own, in the same volume, must be regarded as an evidence at once of the entire fairness of Dr. Wharton's disposition, and of his entire confidence in the sovereign power and certain supremacy of truth. The courteous and Christian spirit which animated the whole controversy evinces, that widely as its authors differed in their views of religion, its power was felt and owned in both their hearts.

The two remaining tracts which make up the volume, were written at a later period, and on a different occasion. A Roman priest in the city of New-York, in the year 1813, who had procured the restitution of some stolen goods, declined to give testimony, at the police-office, as to the person by whom the theft was committed, and pleaded the privilege of the confessional. The question thereupon came up for trial before the Mayor's Court, whether he could be excused from testifying,—and, generally, whether a Roman Catholic Priest can in any case be justifiable in refusing to reveal the secrets of sacramental confession. The Court decided, the Hon. De Witt Clinton, Mayor, presiding, that the witness should be excused from answering. The report of the trial being published by William Sampson, Esq., a Roman Catholic gentleman, one of the counsel in the case ;

there was added, as an appendix, what was called, "A true exposition of the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, touching the sacrament of penance, with the grounds on which this doctrine is founded." To this "True Exposition," Dr. Wharton published a "Short Answer;" which was dedicated to the Bishops, Clergy, and Lay-deputies of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in General Convention assembled,—and in which, conclusive proof from Scripture, from history, and from reason, was given, that the doctrine of auricular confession, as a divinely instituted sacrament of the Christian Church, has no foundation in Scripture,—that it was unknown to the primitive Church,—and that no earthly tribunal has the right to impose or require it. To this "Short Answer," a "Brief Reply" was made by the Rev. Dr. O'Gallagher, to which Dr. Wharton finally rejoined in a pamphlet, entitled "Some Remarks on Dr. O'Gallagher's 'Brief Reply' to Dr. Wharton's 'Short Answer' to 'A true exposition of the doctrine of the Catholic Church, touching the sacrament of penance;' by Charles H. Wharton, D. D., Rector of St. Mary's Church, Burlington, New-Jersey." These two Tracts, pronounced by competent judges to be "learned and well-written," conclude the volume; the second edition* of which, constitutes volume second of these "Remains." The whole is commended confidently to the Christian community, to all who love and seek to know the truth, as an acquisition at all times of great value, and at the pre-

* This is in fact the *third* edition of the first three pieces.

sent time peculiarly interesting and opportune. "To the divine who is desirous of investigating the controversy between Protestants and [Roman] Catholics, this work," says a learned writer,* of the Church of England, "will be extremely useful. Dr. Wharton fully meets his antagonist with arguments drawn from the Scriptures, from the writings of the Fathers, and from Christian antiquity; so that his volume may be considered as a store-house of information to the sincere inquiring Protestant."

In September and October, 1785, being then Rector of Immanuel Church, New-Castle, Delaware, Dr. Wharton attended the General Convention held in the city of Philadelphia; having been also present at the previous, considered as the *first*, General Convention, assembled in New-York, in October, 1784. There is in my possession the manuscript journal of a Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the state of Delaware, held in Dover, on the 26th and 27th days of September, 1786, at which Dr. Wharton was present, and presided; and, as President, was authorized to sign the recommendation of the Rev. WILLIAM WHITE, D. D., for consecration to the Archbishops and Bishops of England. Let not the grateful acknowledgment be here omitted, of that wonderful goodness of God, which preserved the signer of that testimonial to see the reverend brother, whom he thus recommended to "the office of a Bishop," presiding in a house com-

* Rev. T. H. Horne.

posed of *fifteen* of that order,—nay, which is manifested still, though *he* no longer lives to see it, in sustaining with all his intellectual powers, clear, strong, and sound, the venerable prelate, who, having borne for more than forty-seven years, the high commission of a successor of the Apostles, and having transmitted it now to twenty-five of his younger brethren in the ministry, walks still among them, in a green and vigorous old age, and among the households over which the Holy Ghost has placed them, beloved and venerated by all, even as a father by his own children.

It was in 1785, while residing at New-Castle, that Dr. Wharton received, through the instrumentality chiefly of his friend, Dr. White,* very flattering propo-

* The letter in which this subject is first proposed, is deemed proper to be here subjoined, as an evidence of the early influence of that devotion to the best interests of society and the Church, which has uniformly animated its venerable author. Very nearly half a century has passed since it was written.

“DEAR SIR,—

“ Since we parted, I am become ■ notorious speculator, and your literary talents are part of the commodities in which I wish to deal. The shameful state of education in this city, has induced many gentlemen to desire to see an academy opened under the patronage of Christ Church and St. Peter’s ; and I have so far made use of your name, as to mention you as the most suitable gentleman of my acquaintance, to fill the first place in it. I am so fully persuaded it is in your power to have it in your offer, that I cannot but wish you may so far open yourself to me, (under such terms of secrecy as you may choose to enjoin,) as to satisfy me whether you would accept the place, provided it were made as respectable, in regard to salary, as the nature of such a station will admit. My idea is, that it should be always filled by a clergyman of our Church ; chiefly, because I have in contemplation a plan by which our vestry might forward the design by allowing him

sals to accept the headship of an academy just established in Philadelphia, under the auspices of the Protestant Episcopal Church. The fear that its arduous duties might occasion the return of "a long and violent nervous disorder, brought on," as he states, "by too much application, some years ago," obliged him to decline an offer, which would otherwise have possessed great attractions for him. Of his controversy, he thus speaks:—"If my leisure here can be employed in any compila-

a compensation for assisting their clergy in the Sunday duty, leaving him totally disengaged from the parochial.

"Two objects should be proposed in the intended Academy; to fit youth in general for business, and to lay the foundation of a collegiate education, for those who intend to take it, so that a year or two at the University may suffice.

"Among many projects that occur to me on this subject, I submit to you the following outlines for your opinion. Suppose three schools for English, Mathematics, and the Latin and Greek languages. Although I am convinced of your abilities for either, I wish to see you in the last, for two reasons; first, because I wish to see (what has never been attempted here,) a classical taste for the English tongue, accompanying the knowledge of the Latin; for which purpose, the eldest classes in this school should attend to rhetoric, together with the higher classics—suppose Cicero's Orations, Horace, and Longinus.

"Whatever you may determine in respect to yourself, your opinion on any part of our plan will be at all times gratefully received. As to salary, the matter is too much in embryo for me to say any thing in that respect—only I will mention, that I should not think of you on the occasion, were I not persuaded the station might be made more eligible than that you now fill.

"Excuse the haste in which I write, and believe me to be

"Your friend and humble servant,

"W. WHITE.

"*Philadelphia, October 23, 1784.*"

tions for school uses, that you may judge necessary, I will gladly devote it to such purposes, when once I get Mr. Carroll off my hands. Fortunately, I have by me two or three common-place books, in which I had marked down at length, some of my principal authorities. Usher and Burnet are the only two books I shall want. A few days more will enable me to complete my little answer." This letter is dated February 1, 1785.

In October, 1791, Dr. Wharton was invited, in a summons now before me, in which he is styled Rector of the Church [the Swedish,] near Wilmington; and there is still preserved an address to the congregation of that Church, in which, in March, 1792, he took leave of them as Rector. He continued to reside on his estate at Prospect Hill, near Wilmington, until his removal to Burlington. It was during his residence there, that he published "A short and candid inquiry into the proofs of Christ's divinity; in which Dr. Priestley's history of opinions concerning Christ, is occasionally considered: in a letter to a friend."

In 1795, he was invited to be Principal of the Academy at Burlington, with a view to the Rectorship of St. Mary's Church. Called, in 1798, to the last named office, he accepted it, and removed to Burlington; continuing in the humble, quiet, faithful discharge of its sacred duties, beloved and honoured by all who knew him, for more than thirty-five years. A rare instance, in the vicissitudes of the world, of calm and peaceful

repose. A beautiful illustration of the power of the religion of Christ, to give contentment and enjoyment to one of the best furnished and most accomplished intellects which our times have known, in the simple occupations of the pastoral office. A most instructive lesson, that not in wealth, not in fashion, not in office, not in power; but in domestic peace, in the chastened intercourse of Christian friends, in the regulated enjoyment of the beauties and bounties of nature, in the cultivation, for the glory of their Giver, of the powers and graces of the mind, and in the answer of an approving conscience, obtained in the steady, earnest, and habitual discharge, from the love of God, of the duties of that station to which it has pleased him to call us, does the happiness of man consist,—then only worthy of the name, then only permitted to the Christian, when, through the merits of the crucified Saviour, and in the strength of the sanctifying Spirit, its professor looks forward, as the one great object of his being, to “the end of his faith,” in “the salvation of his soul.”

Of what followed the settlement at Burlington, to the close of that long and venerated life, on the twenty-third day of July, 1833, the commemorative sermon, preached by the Editor, and published by the request of the congregation of St. Mary's Church, will be the most convenient vehicle; as it also offers the fittest opportunity to sketch those traits of character which beautified its beloved and lamented subject, and endeared him to all hearts. Occasional notes, and the appen-

dix, will convey whatever more is needed to complete the venerable portraiture.

That the author and the reader, being "accounted worthy," through the merits of the divine Saviour, "to obtain *that* world, and the resurrection of the dead," may, at the last, be found of that redeemed company, who, being "the children of God," "are equal unto the Angels," and CAN DIE NO MORE, may He mercifully grant who "is the God, not of the dead, but of the living!"

THE DEAD WHO DIE NO MORE:

A FUNERAL SERMON,

Delivered in

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, BURLINGTON, N. J

On Sunday, August 4, 1833,

BY

THE RIGHT REV. GEORGE W. DOANE, D. D

Bishop of the Diocese of New-Jersey.

S E R M O N .

NEITHER CAN THEY DIE ANY MORE.

St. Luke, xx. 36.

ST. PAUL, writing to Timothy, declares that Jesus Christ our Saviour “hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the Gospel.”* By his abolishing death, or rather depriving it of its tyrannic power, we are to understand that victory achieved by him upon the Cross, by which he procured for all who believe in him a resurrection to eternal life,—an achievement celebrated by the same Apostle, in that noble passage in his first Epistle to the Corinthians: “The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!”† By his bringing life and immortality to light, through the Gospel, we are not to understand its first intimation to mankind, but its clear and full revelation,—its being made luminous, as it were, in the lessons of his life, but broadest and brightest, even as with a blaze of glory, in his own mighty resurrection,—“Now is Christ risen

* 2 Timothy i. 10.

† 1 Corinthians xv. 56, 57.

from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept; for, since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”*

But though it would by no means be correct to say, what the passage of St. Paul, properly understood, does not say, that Jesus Christ, in the Gospel, “brought life and immortality,” (by which is meant immortal life,) “to light,” in the sense commonly conveyed by this phrase, of first disclosure or suggestion; it would be a far greater error to suppose, that before the revelation of the Gospel, or independently of it, the world had any thing like clear and certain light upon the subject. In the desires and longings of the soul, unsatisfied by all that the brief span of its terrestrial being can be made to comprehend, the wiser of the ancient Heathen saw, or thought they saw, an intimation, scarcely stronger than a faint suspicion, of another life. From their experience of the utter inconsistency of the arrangements of this present world, even with what men call justice, they reasoned, feebly, for the most part, and inconclusively, and without the least shadow of effect upon their practice, to the probable retributions of another. And in the analogies of nature, the morning’s daily beauties, the annual resurrection of the spring, and the strange transformations of some species of the insect race, they caught, with pardonable eagerness, at what seemed to

* 1 Corinthians xv. 20—22.

be unquestionable confirmation of the "trembling hope" within them.

To the nation of the Jews, God, designing them for lofty uses in his plan for saving sinners, did not so leave without encouragement man's inborn aspirations for the future. To Moses, as the Saviour in the context clearly proves, the Lord, declaring himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, long after their departure from this mortal state of being, plainly declared the existence of another, and so virtually revealed a future, if not an immortal, life. While the sublime strains of David, and Isaiah, and Hosea,—“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption; thou wilt show me the path of life, in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore,”*—and again, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise;” “the earth shall cast out the dead,”†—and again, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction;”‡—contain such explicit declarations of this most comfortable truth, as render it inconceivable by us, enlightened as we are by the glorious Gospel, how any could have avoided the power of its conviction. And yet, when Jesus, citing the example of Moses at the bush, refuted the Sadducees, proving against them the doctrine of the resurrection, St. Matthew records,

* Psalm xvi. 10, 11.

† Isaiah xxvi. 10.

‡ Hosea xiii. 14.

that “when the multitude heard this, they were *astonished* at his doctrine.”* Of the whole world, then, it may be said,—a few illustrious examples, the patriarchs, prophets, and holy men among the Jews excepted,—that, as to any powerful, permanent, or practical impressions of a future world, they groped miserably in the dark. The multitude, in a thick and palpable darkness, like that of Egypt; the few philosophers and sages, in that uncertain, glimmering twilight, which is more deceptive even than the thickest gloom. They saw, the most enlightened of them, like the bewildered mariner in the gray dawn, some undefined and distant object, which might be the fair land of promise, or which might be fog. The Sun of righteousness arose, and the dim haze passed off, and the celestial world shone out, resplendent with perennial verdure and eternal radiance. It is “our Saviour Jesus Christ” alone, who “hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality” *fully* “to light.”

My brethren, it is this perfect certainty, this cloudless light thrown on it by the Gospel, which makes the revelation of immortality a valuable revelation, and the Christian “hope of everlasting life” indeed a “blessed hope.” To what purpose, as we stood by the bedside of our beloved, and saw the glazing eye, and marked the creeping chill, and heard the struggling breath,—to what purpose, in the estimate of yearning love, the shadowy confidence of Socrates, “I hope to go hence to

* St. Matthew xxii. 33.

good men and to God, but of that I am not very certain!" And when the death stroke reaches our own heart, and one by one we hear the last sands falling in the glass, and feel the slow drops, one by one, creep coldly from the fount of life, to find their way to it again no more, then to what purpose the surmise, the conjecture, the faint hope, half doubt, half fear, of something after death,—we know not where, we know not what! "Thanks be to God,"—let us proclaim it with a fuller and more fervent exultation, as, year after year, the best beloved of our bosom fall beside us from the tree of life!—"thanks be to God,"—let us acknowledge it with deeper and more glowing gratitude, as, day by day, the stealing canker, or the pelting storm weakens *our* hold upon its laden boughs!—"thanks be to God," that we are not so left to "sorrow, even as others who have no hope!" "For, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him!"* Blessed are they who "shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection of the dead,"—"NEITHER CAN THEY DIE ANY MORE: for they are equal to the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection!"†

It is when we turn, my Christian brethren, to the page of revelation, for instruction on this grandest of all themes that have connexion with mortality, its promise of immortal being, that we find the assertion of it clear and strong, its record written as with a sunbeam. Listen

* 1 Thessalonians iv. 13, 14.

† St. Luke xx. 35, 36.

to Jesus at the tomb of the beloved Lazarus:—"I am THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall *never die*."* Listen to the words of the same divine teacher, by the Sea of Galilee:—"Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath *everlasting life*."† Hear the solemn prayer, which, as he went forth to the garden to be betrayed, he offered for all that should believe on him; declaring in the strongest forms of language, the inseparable union designed to be effected between the divine and human natures, himself to be the medium:—"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."‡ And hear him on the same touching occasion,—the Prince of life, "the Father everlasting,"§ who is "alive for evermore,"|| and "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,"¶—hear him utter to his disciples the solemn declaration, pledging, as it were, his own immortality for theirs:—"Because I live, ye shall live also;"**—*as certainly as mine is, so certainly is your existence*, FOR EVER AND FOR EVER! And hear him, finally,—if the intense desire of human nature require a farther assurance, and if the powers of language avail for its conveyance,—hear him in the words of the text, expressly assert of them, that "are accounted worthy to obtain

* St. John xi, 25, 26. † St. John vi. 47. ‡ St. John xvii. 21. § Isaiah lx. 6.

|| Revelation i. 18. ¶ Hebrews xiii. 8. ** St. John xiv. 19.

that world, and the resurrection from the dead,"—"NEITHER CAN THEY DIE ANY MORE." It is not that they *will* not die. It is not that they *shall* not die. But it is that they *can* not die any more. They are under an impossibility of death. They are heirs of an indestructible existence. They are the subjects of a divine constraint to live for ever.* "Blessed is every one that obtaineth part in the first resurrection, for on such the second death can have no power!"†

Nor is it to immortal existence only, that the pious dead are called, but to unmingled blessedness. The context tells us of them who cannot die any more, that they are "equal unto the angels,"—the peers and fellows of the host of heaven,—seeing the same sights, employed in the same work, sharing in the same joys, with the pure spirits that surround the throne. Into the blaze of that effulgence in which they bask,—a day to which there is no night, and of which the Lord God himself is the light and glory,—it is not ours to look. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." "Behold,"

* The train of thought suggested here, is more fully developed by the ingenious author of "Saturday evening."

† Revelation xx. 6. Ought not this view of the immortality to which our nature may attain, through Christ, to be more dwelt on in vindication of the divine justice and mercy to our race? Fallen from its original righteousness by the abuse of its own freedom, it is made capable of an elevation, through Christ, to a state of security greater than that of angels. They have fallen. The risen in Christ can fall no more. Over them the second death can have no power.

saith the beloved John, who in a vision saw the New Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down from God, "behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."* "And there shall in no wise enter into it,"—let the sentence of exclusion, brethren, be considered well!—"there shall in no wise enter into it, any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they who are written in the Lamb's book of life."†

To be accounted "worthy," then, "to obtain that world," and the "resurrection from the dead," we must, by the profession of our faith in Christ, as crucified for sinners, have our names "written in the book of life," of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" and, renewed to righteousness, by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, we must walk worthily of our profession. Theirs is a dangerous error, then, who speak of heaven as if it were a thing of course, and who expect to enter it with no more preparation than if they were but passing from one earthly kingdom to another. It is a new world, let us remember, "wherein dwelleth righteousness;" and, in the sight of Him who fills it with his presence, even "the stars are not pure."‡ Of them who belong to it, and whose pre-eminent blessing it is,

* Revelation xxi. 3, 4.

† Revelation xxi. 27.

‡ Job xiv. 5.

that, like their Saviour, *they can die no more*, he declares that they are “as the angels of God.” Christian brethren, are we living as becomes so high a destination? Are our aspirations after their resplendent purity? And is their prompt obedience to his commandments, the object of our holy emulation?

My brethren, to the *worthiness* to obtain that world of which the Saviour speaks, literally construed, we can make no claim. It must be purchased for us by the blood of the Son of God. It must be wrought in us by the indwelling power of the Spirit of God. It is faith, working by love, and purifying the heart, that is to make us “*meet* for the inheritance of the saints in light;” and being found *meet*, we shall, in God’s great mercy, be “accounted *worthy*” to obtain it. “Eternal life,” let us remember, that we may not despair, is “the free gift of God.” That we may not presume, let us also remember, that it is given only “through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* He is “the *WAX*.” He is “the *TRUTH*.” He is “the *LIFE*.”† Going to him in faith, clinging to him in love, walking with him in holy obedience, he will reveal to us the *truth*, he will direct us in the *way*, he will bestow on us the *life*. So shall we, in patience and in hope, pursue the path of our brief mortal being. So shall we follow on in pious joy the holy footsteps of our departed friends who “sleep in Jesus.” So shall we join at last “the Forerunner,” who has gone in be-

* Romans vi. 23.

† St. John xiv. 6.

fore us, and with the joyous host of them who are as angels, and can never die, “be ever with the Lord”*

With these expressive emblems of mortality about us, that new-made grave within our sight, and the sad notes of the funereal dirge still lingering in our ears, there needs not,—if indeed for dying men preaching to dying men there ever could,—one word in explanation of the subject thus presented for your consideration. The consolations which our religion throws around the passage to the tomb, at all times fitted to the uncertain tenure of our life, have special welcome in the hour when fainting nature mourns her loved and lost. To know that Jesus is “the resurrection and the life,” must ever be the Christian’s crowning joy. But when, “with solemn step and slow,” he follows to the grave all that was mortal of some dear departed friend, is there not, Christian mourners, a pathos in the words, unknown, unfelt before? And fall they not upon the heart that breaks and bleeds, like precious balsam, with celestial virtue to soothe the anguish, and to heal the wound? Blessed be God, that in the retrospect of his whole life, whom now we mourn as children for a loved and venerated father, there rises not one doubt or fear to check the exulting confidence of that triumphant strain—“he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die!” Blessed be God, that from the recollection of that serene and peaceful

* 1 Thess. iv. 17.

death, we are enabled to look forward with unflinching hope to that all-glorious day, when "them who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him!"* "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruptible, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory! Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

My brethren of this congregation, there is not one among you, whom time and opportunity do not better enable to commemorate the character, the virtues, and the services of our lamented friend, than him on whom the office has devolved. And yet to no man living will he yield in reverential and affectionate regard, and in sincere desires that a memory so precious should be worthily embalmed. The offering which I bring, then, you will accept as the offering of love. Its errors and deficiencies you will supply, or overlook. And you will unite your prayers with mine, that as our beloved followed Christ, so we may be followers of him,—as upright, as sincere, as humble, as benevolent, as blameless in our life; as tranquil, as resigned, as full of faith, and hope, and love, and joy in death. So shall the departed spirit of our friend and father, be to us as a new

* 1 Corinthians xv. 53—57.

treasure laid up in heaven, bearing our hearts with him from this vale of misery and tears, to that better world in which they are unknown ; and beckoning us onward, by the winning loveliness of his example, that,—justified by faith in the same precious Saviour in whom he trusted, and saved by the blood of that Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which alone he gloried,—we too may swell the choral song of that great company, who evermore before the throne proclaim His praises, who loved them, and washed them from their sins.

CHARLES HENRY WHARTON was born in St. Mary's county, in Maryland, on the 25th of May, O. S. 1748. His ancestors were Roman Catholics; and the family plantation, called Notley Hall, from a Governor of that name, was presented to the grandfather of our friend by Lord Baltimore. From him it descended to the father, Jesse Wharton; and at his death, in 1754, became the property of Charles Henry, his elder son.* His mother, Anne Bradford, like his father, was descended from a respectable family among the first settlers of the province. He describes her as "a woman of sweet manners, and uncommon beauty;" and is to be added, on his own testimony, to the host of great and good men who have owed their greatness and their goodness, under God, to a mother's precepts, piety, and prayers. "Many of her maternal precepts and tender

* Jesse Wharton had but two children. The younger son was born, I am inclined to believe, after his father's death.

caresses," he says, in a little sketch of his first fifteen years, written with such exquisite simplicity, tenderness, and beauty, as to fill us with regret that it extends no farther, "are still fresh in my memory, and frequently present her dear image to my mind." When not quite seven years old, he was attacked by a furious dog, who had already torn off a part of his scalp, when his father, with signal presence of mind and promptitude of action, seizing a loaded gun from behind the door, shot the dog, while the child's head was still in his jaws. Thus were both of his parents doubly entitled to his gratitude, as authors not only, but as preservers and benefactors of his being. The one, under divine providence, rescued his life from premature destruction; the other, by divine grace, moulded his young heart for usefulness, happiness, and immortality. At a period far beyond the lot of man, he was accustomed to speak of these benefits with the fervour and susceptibility of youth,—a living monument, for nearly fourscore years and ten, of parental piety, and of filial love and gratitude. As might be reasonably expected, under such auspices, his intellectual culture was not neglected. So that when it was determined in 1760, (being then in his twelfth year,) to send him abroad for his education, he could read and write tolerably well, and was fonder of his book than boys at that age generally are. In the year last named, he was sent to the English Jesuits' College, at St. Omer's. His master was the Rev. Edmund Walsh; to whom, he says, "as a most amiable and affec-

tionate man, as well as a good classical scholar, I was attached by the most unlimited confidence, and the warmest sentiments of gratitude and love, which I shall ever cherish." At the close of two years, the College of St. Omer's was broken up by the expulsion of the Jesuits from France. The teachers and scholars retired to Bruges, in Flanders, where they enjoyed the protection of the Austrian government.

From this period until the date of his ordination, there is little known, except that he was engaged a part of the time at Liege, in giving mathematical instruction; of his great proficiency in which science, his papers afford evidence. His letters of orders bear date in 1772; having been admitted in June of that year to the order of Deacons, and in September, to that of Priests. At the latter end of the war of the American Revolution, he was residing in Worcester, in England, in the capacity of Chaplain to the Roman Catholics of that city, deeply interested on the side of his country, and anxious to return. He employed his pen at this time in a poetical epistle to General Washington, with a sketch of his life, which was published in England for the benefit of the American prisoners there. The poem had the rare fortune to be read in manuscript, and to have alterations suggested in it, by the celebrated Sir William Jones. From frequent allusions in the correspondence of an intimate friend residing in London, it is evident that his mind was at this period much agitated on the

subject of his religious creed.* He returned to this country, in 1783, in the first vessel, as I am told, which sailed after the peace. Within a year after this, in May, 1784, as I am informed by the venerable Bishop White, he visited Philadelphia for the purpose of publishing his celebrated letter to the Roman Catholics of the city of Worcester. "This production," says the Bishop,—whose reminiscences of one whom for fifty years he had known and loved, communicated with his accustomed kindness at my request,† and characterized with that accuracy and interest which attach to all that he writes, have done me the greatest service,—“was perused by me with great pleasure in manuscript, and the subject of it caused much conversation during his stay in our city. The result was my entire conviction that the soundness of his arguments for the change of his religious profession, was fully equalled by the sincerity and disinterestedness which accompanied the transaction.”

For the first year after his return to America, Mr. Wharton resided at the paternal mansion; on leaving which, in July, 1784, the principal residents of the vicinage presented him, unasked and unsolicited, with a most honourable testimonial of his worth as a gentle-

* The destruction of a trunk of papers by an officious housekeeper many years ago, has deprived us of written information as to this important period. Dr. Wharton's timidity and low estimate of himself, together with his extreme sensibility on the subject, prevented much oral communication with his friends. To the present writer he unbosomed himself without reserve.

† See Appendix, No. II.

man, a scholar, a Christian, and a Christian minister. It is a document of singular excellence in sentiment, spirit, and expression; and does high honour to them who freely gave, as well as to him who worthily received it.

The next public notice of him which I find, is his presence at the General Convention, held in Philadelphia, in September and October, 1785,—as Rector of Immanuel Church, Newcastle, Delaware,—having been present, as Bishop White informs me, at the previous meeting, considered as the *first* General Convention, held in New-York, in October, 1784. Between this date and 1792, he was connected with the Swedish Church, at Wilmington; from which period until 1798, he resided on his estate at Prospect Hill, in the neighbourhood of that town, in feeble health, and probably without a pastoral charge. In the year 1798 his connexion with St. Mary's Church was formed; and has thus continued, under circumstances of peace, usefulness, and happiness, rarely equalled in human associations, for more than thirty-five years. The deserved reputation which Dr. Wharton's scholarship had procured him, rendered him an object of great desire with several of our literary institutions. In 1801, he was unanimously elected to the Presidency of Columbia College, in the city of New-York, which he accepted, and presided at the commencement; but in the course of the year, to the great disappointment of the friends of the College, tendered his resignation. In 1803, he was powerfully

urged to become principal of the College at Beaufort, South Carolina, and rector of the Parish there, but declined the appointment. The emoluments of office, in both these latter cases, would greatly have exceeded the value of his parochial living. But he loved retirement. He was unwilling to undertake duties which his health might not enable him to discharge. He was reluctant to dissolve the sacred bond which years of endearment and confidence had formed with the friends of his bosom, and the people of his charge. And more than all, he had learned, with an Apostle, in whatsoever state he was, to be therewith content. For the rest, yourselves know, my brethren of this parish, "how holily, and justly, and unblameably," he behaved himself, in his going out and coming in amongst you. How faithfully he spoke to you the words of eternal life. How assiduously he administered among you the ordinances of Christ.* How free from guile were all his words. How humble, and disinterested, and generous, the whole tenor of his intercourse. How eloquently his whole life and conversation enforced and illustrated the precepts which he spoke. Your own friend, and the friend of your fathers, having admitted many of you by baptism into the Christian Church, hav-

* It is right to say, that Dr. Wharton was not, in the common sense of the word, an *active* man. His habits were contemplative rather than active. Such indeed was his natural bent; and it was confirmed by his early education and engagements, and by feeble health. He was, however, scrupulously faithful in discharging whatever appeared to be his duty. His memory is tenderly loved by all, and especially by the poor.

ing consecrated the endearing bond of your domestic union, followed your parents to the grave, and taught your children's lips to lisp the first accents of religious truth,—I can well appreciate the interest with which you watched the progress of his last disease, the deep and silent sorrow with which the tidings of its issue filled all hearts, and the affecting tenderness with which, when dust was rendered back to dust, your bitter tears were blended with the clods that covered from your sight all that was mortal of your loved and venerated friend.

It was not, as you all know, my good fortune to share with you this intimate and long continued friendship. By reputation I had indeed known him as a pillar and ornament of the Church—adorning by his life the doctrines which with his voice he proclaimed, and with his pen had so ably advocated. I knew him as among the very first in scholarship* of the clergy of America, a sound and thoroughly accomplished divine, a practiced and successful controversialist, a faithful parish priest, the patriarch of the diocese in which he lived; but I had never seen him. When, therefore, by a strange providence, I was called to the highest office in this diocese, among the thoughts which were the first to follow the appalling conviction of its responsibilities, was that of the relationship which its acceptance would create between myself and him; and I confess that in the reflec-

* He was elected ■ member of the American Philosophical Society, while Dr. Franklin was President.

tion I was deeply humbled. But scarcely had the evidence of my appointment reached me, when a letter came from him, so kind, so encouraging, so expressive of his hearty acquiescence in the appointment, and his hearty desires for its consummation, as to contribute most materially to the determination of my assent. I saw him first in my visitation to this parish in December last; and though for a few hours only, there was in his deportment, a tender so free and generous of his approbation and confidence, a simplicity so perfectly translucent, and a mixture—so much in keeping with his venerable aspect, his profound acquirements, and his long experience,—of the affection expressed for a son, and the deference designed for an official superior, as embarrassed and perplexed me, while it wholly won my heart. Our subsequent intercourse was of the most endearing character, and leaves nothing for the survivor to lament, but, that, as Providence designed it to be so brief, official absence should have diminished so much its golden opportunities. I looked forward, I confess, with eagerness to the conclusion of my public engagements, that I might sit down with him, in his delightful, quiet home, and gather wisdom from his words, while I learned piety from his example. But the Disposer of all things did not gratify my hopes. His health had been for some time failing when I saw him first; and though serene and cheerful, and long I trusted to be preserved to us in a green old age, it was but too apparent that

the energies of his constitution were impaired, and that the elastic tone and vigour of his spirit were unbent. In the conversations which I had with him, he displayed the deepest interest in the extension of the Church of Christ, and the soundest judgment in his views and estimate of the means by which it was to be promoted. Especially did the General Theological Seminary, and the General Missionary Society, occupy his thoughts; and it was his desire and determination to accompany me to the annual meeting of the Board of Directors of the last named institution, in May last. Indisposition however prevented. And I had quite given up the long cherished hope of enjoying his presence and counsel at the late Convention of this diocese. On the morning of the day of meeting, however, to my great joy, he arrived at Camden. He took a warm and active part in the proceedings, gave to the measures proposed the most manly and vigorous support, engaged earnestly in the debates, and appeared in body and in mind, in voice and bearing, like one a full half century his junior. It was his last exertion. From that time he did not appear in public, and indeed scarcely left his house. His disease became gradually seated. The ability to struggle with it was gradually diminished. He reluctantly gave up, for even a single Lord's day, the accustomed duty. He retreated reluctantly to his chamber and to his bed. The best resources of the healing art were applied with the utmost assiduity and skill. The con-

stancy and tenderness of conjugal devotion,* and the vigilance and care of relatives and friends, supplied whatever love could prompt and earth afford for his recovery and relief. But it was vain. Exhausted nature could not rally. And gently declining, day by day, our friend and father, after a few brief struggles—more painful probably to the faithful hearts that watched beside him, than to himself—fell sweetly asleep, even as an infant sinks to rest upon his mother's bosom, on the morning of Tuesday, the twenty-third day of July; having entered nearly two months upon his eighty-sixth year, and having been for more than sixty-one years a minister of Christ,—the senior Presbyter of the American Protestant Episcopal Church.

Throughout his sickness, when not absent from home on official duty, it was my privilege to see him daily; and a death-bed so serene, so tranquil, so triumphant, I have never witnessed. It seemed from the first day to the last, so far as the issue of life was concerned, as if nature had been wholly set aside by grace.† The single

* Dr. Wharton was twice married,—to Mary, the daughter of Col. Weems, of Maryland, who died in June, 1798; and to Ann, daughter of Chief Justice Kinsey, of New-Jersey, who survives him. He had no children.

† One Sunday morning, towards the close of his life, an hour, which I spent with him, was most delightfully occupied in a conversation about the hymns of the Church, as well in Latin as in English. He repeated from memory the words of many of the former; especially, I remember his repeating with great fervour, "*Dies iræ, dies illa.*" He also recited "*Te Deum laudamus,*" and the beautiful hymn of Prudentius, "*Salvete, flores martyrum!*" The English hymn which gave him most pleasure, was "Jesus, Saviour of my soul;" the whole of which he regretted was not inserted in our collection of hymns.

sentiment which animated and pervaded all he said, was still, "Thy will be done!" He was the humblest and most self-abased of Christians. In his long life there was nothing, he said, on which for a single moment he could rest. He had endeavoured to be useful with his "poor abilities," as he always termed them, but he had done nothing. What he looked back to with the nearest approach to satisfaction, was his desire and effort to promote peace and harmony among men. In this respect he hoped that if he had done little good, he had at least prevented some harm. But the theme in which he gloried was the Cross. That was the subject of his thoughts, and the burden of his conversation. He clung naked to it, with a child's simplicity and helplessness. "I have been thinking," he said to me one day, "of the wonders of redeeming love. And the more I dwell upon it, the more I am filled with admiration, that the Almighty God, the Maker of every thing in heaven and earth, my Maker and my Judge, should stoop to earth, and take vile flesh, and bare his bosom and pour out his blood—for ME!" "Oh, my dear friend," he would often say to me, "the Cross, the Cross is all. What should we be without the Cross? The Lamb of God, *he* taketh away the sins of the world. The blood of Jesus Christ, *that* cleanseth from all sin!" But I must check myself,—delightful as it is to dwell on these triumphant testimonies to the truth and power of our religion, and comfortable as it is to know, that he who preached the Gospel so faithfully to others, was himself

so graciously supported by its truths and consolations. It remains for me to sketch with rapid, faltering hand, the portraiture of our departed friend; and set him before you, as the time and my ability permit, faithfully, though faintly, in the beautiful traits of his personal character, in the rich and rare accomplishments of his mind, and in the faithful discharge of the several relations and offices of his private and public life.

The first characteristic of Dr. Wharton which arrested your attention, was his singular *purity* of character. He was single-hearted and single-eyed beyond almost all men whom I ever knew. He had neither guile, nor the suspicion of it. Long as he had lived in the world, he seemed to have suffered little from its contact. There was a delicacy of sentiment and feeling in him, which not only bespoke his own purity of heart, but kept the atmosphere about him pure. He meant ill to no man, and he distrusted none. He seemed habitually to entertain, and make his own, that loveliest attribute of love, "charity thinketh no evil."

It was this habitual purity which gave to all his conversation and conduct an air of such engaging *simplicity*. In speech and manner he was artless as a child. His character was perfectly transparent. He concealed nothing, because he had nothing to conceal. You read his heart at once. It was the result of this uncompromising simplicity of purpose and of action, that when he began to doubt the soundness of the faith in which he

was first nurtured, he was impelled, without the possibility of resistance, to pursue the inquiry to the end. Satisfied of his error, it was equally impossible to conceal it. To confess, to retract, to renounce, were links in the chain which admitted of no separation. To proclaim his conversion, cost what it might; to assert, through evil report, and through good report, the cause which he had espoused, were parts of the same character. In one other respect, he preserved the same beautiful consistency. Renouncing the errors of his early youth, he deemed it no part of his duty to denounce the men who held them. The great lights of the Church of Rome he regarded with unaffected reverence. Of Archbishop Carroll, his antagonist in controversy, as he was his kinsman in the flesh, he spoke, to the very last, with warm affection. "It was a remarkable trait in the character of the deceased," says Bishop White, "that from the beginning to the end of my acquaintance with him, he was a decided advocate of Jesuits, with the exception of the tenets of the Roman Catholic creed. In argument he was prepared at all points, in any controversy concerning them, touching the crimes of which they are accused." I myself have never heard him speak of the suppression of the order but with strong reprobation. Was not this the result of his own guileless simplicity, determined to think no evil of them to whom he was so indebted? And was not a youth of his exquisite purity, one whom *their* policy would keep in ignorance of the truth?

Kindred with these virtues, was his rare *humility*. With the best education that Europe could afford ; as a divine, second, by the allowance of all, to none in America ; as a controversialist unanswered and unanswerable ; he was not only unconscious of his distinction, but he would not be made conscious of it. He never lent a sermon, without wondering that any person should wish to read *his* “ poor effort,” when there were so many superior discourses in print. I obtained with the greatest difficulty his promise,—which, alas ! he did not live to fulfil,—that he would draw up a sketch of the progress of his mind in the rejection of the errors of the Church of Rome ;—“ for of what value,” said he, “ can my opinions be to any one ?” From his most intimate friends he was unwilling to hear the voice of praise ; and if in any thing he could be rude, it was in the rejection of those expressions of approbation, which even to Christians are the allowed reward of excellence, and encouragement of effort,—as delightful too to them who sincerely offer, as to them who worthily receive them. In him, all this was the result of true humility before God. He knew the deceitfulness of the heart, and he therefore feared the praise of men. To him, man’s judgment was but a light matter. It was his effort and his prayer, so to judge himself, that he might not be judged of the Lord.

There grew out of all this, or rather there existed in him, as a fruit of the Spirit, in connexion with it all, a wonderful *disinterestedness*. The principle of self

seemed in him, as nearly as in humanity it can, to have been absorbed and lost. His whole course of life had reference to all other interests more than to his own. He lived for the Church first, and then for those whom he loved. He never sought advancement. When offered, he refused it, lest he should not do justice to its responsibilities. And when he had consented, he shrunk back, as if distrustful of himself,—the only being whom he seemed capable of distrusting.

Thus conqueror of himself, he was full of *kindness* and *charity* to others. He thought well of all men, and therefore he spoke well of them. He desired good to all men, and therefore he ever sought to do them good. He was the kindest husband, and most devoted friend. He was emphatically a man of peace. To the poor his attentions were most exemplary. They rise up and call him blessed. The cause of Missions was always near his heart. The annual contributions of the people of his parish gave evidence of what manner of spirit their pastor was. In his last will he has nobly remembered the General Missionary Society; and by the provision which he has made for supporting the ministry of the Gospel, at the altar where he himself served so long, generations yet unborn will, I trust, be blessed with spiritual blessing.*

* By his last will, his library is left for the use of the Rector of St. Mary's Church; and on the decease of Mrs. Wharton, his whole estate, after the payment of *one thousand* dollars to the General Missionary Society, is given to the parish of St. Mary's, as a fund for the increase of the Rector's salary.

And, as the crowning and completing grace of all, our departed friend was exemplary in *piety*. The faith by which he triumphed in his death, had made him conqueror through life. It had given him the victory over himself not only, but over the world. The Cross in which he gloried, had crucified the world unto him, and him unto the world. His piety was deep, fervent, and unostentatious. It did not burn with fitful and uncertain flame, but with a pure, sustained, and steady lustre. The aliment on which it fed was the sincere word of God. It was enkindled in him by the Holy Spirit. He nourished and cherished it by daily intercourse with heaven. For seventy years he had made a little copy of the "Imitation of Christ" the companion of his first morning meditations. And daily, at a set hour, as since his death I have been informed, he retired for self-examination and prayer. These he well knew were the means, however, and not the end of religion. In love to God, and love to man, he ever strove, by divine grace, to manifest its fruits. And it was the experience of his life, as it was the testimony of his death, that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."*

Of Dr. Wharton as a scholar, I have before cursorily spoken. I now allude to his profound and various learning, chiefly with reference to the true devotion with which he consecrated it to God, and, in the language

* Romans xiv. 17.

of his ordination promise, drew his cares and studies all this way. With a most decided genius for mathematics, a perfect mastery of classical literature, and no ordinary measure of poetical ability,* he is known only as a divine. In this, his proper department of study, he was a master. His book on the Roman Catholic controversy is a standard work.† His labours for several years as editor of a Theological Magazine, were most acceptable and useful to the Church.‡ And when the General Theological Seminary was established, he was nominated as one of its first Professors.§ In all the important measures relative to the organization of the Church in this country, and especially in the revision of the Liturgy, his learning, wisdom, and moderation were, as Bishop White assures me, most effective and valuable. The councils of the Church, general and diocesan, were always aided by his presence and participation. And his last act, as we have seen, was his efficient promotion of the interests of the diocese of New Jersey, in its late Convention,—thus dying, as it were, in the service of that cause to which his long life had been so usefully devoted.

* Some specimens of his skill in poetry will be found in the Appendix.

† “I have long had his masterly treatises in controversy with Dr. Carroll,” says the Rev. Thomas Hartwell Horne, “and value them among my choicest books against Popery.”

‡ It was continued for four years, and its collected numbers make four volumes. He was chiefly assisted in the editorial department, by his intimate friend, the Rev. James Abercrombie, D. D. The Rev. George Boyd was also associated with him.

§ This was in 1818. The department was Systematic Theology.

In his appropriate public character, as a preacher of the Gospel, I never had an opportunity to know Dr. Wharton. His sermons which I have read, are of a chastened and persuasive style of oratory, well arranged, written evidently from the heart, and in a diction which is like crystal for its purity and clearness. As a preacher of the Gospel, he was a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. Every where, and on all occasions, he preached "CHRIST CRUCIFIED." The Cross is the great central light of his whole system, both in faith and morals. The sinfulness and helplessness of man, salvation by grace through faith, the necessity of a new creation unto holiness, and the agency of the divine Spirit in producing it, were his favourite and prevailing themes. The people of his charge are without excuse if they believe not the Gospel of Christ. His last ministrations among them were on the festival of Whitsunday. His last office was the celebration of the Holy Supper of the Lord. His last words in this sacred place were a devout prayer, that the "Divine Spirit would sanctify all Christians who, under his sacred influence, should resolve so to live continually in this world, that they may reign with him eternally in the next!"*

Nor, in thus setting up the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, was he unmindful of the CHURCH, which he purchased with his blood. To proclaim the Gospel in the Church, he believed to be God's way of saving sinners.

* Sermon for Whitsunday,—“The Spirit of God, and the Spirit of the World,” the last in this volume.

He, indeed, in the exercise of his truly catholic spirit, regarded all who name the name of Christ with affectionate interest. And so far as principle could be preserved, he was at one time desirous of comprehending the pious of another denomination within the fold of the Church.* With increasing experience, however, his caution increased. I must ever regard it as one of the most valued tributes that I can receive on earth, that he repeatedly declared, upon the most intimate acquaintance with my views of the doctrine, discipline, and policy, that they were identical with his own. It was his deep and strong conviction, again and again expressed, that *the entire Church* was to be inviolately preserved; and that the strictest adherence to all its provisions and regulations was the surest path not only of truth and duty, but of charity and peace.

Of the influence of such a course, so pursued, it is not necessary for me here to speak. His whole congregation looking up to him as children to a father, in this whole community not one that did not love him as a

* A proposal to this end, drawn up at length, and with great care, is among his papers, with strictures by Bishop Hobart, to whom it had been submitted. It was never published. An amiable, but impracticable, vision, it is a great satisfaction to know that while the goodness of heart which prompted it, continued to the last to increase, its Author, by reflection and experience, attained to more judicious views, and a bolder and firmer adherence to them. Many things in his official course which had been done with the best intentions, and for peace' sake, he lived to lament as errors of judgment. As a Churchman, he was, in his last years, much more consistent and decided. Of the principles and policy pursued by Bishop Hobart, he declared himself very often in terms of the highest approbation.

friend,—these, at the close of five and thirty years, are testimonials, not to be called in question, to the fidelity of his public services, and the excellence of his private character. For himself, he has gone beyond their reach. He sleeps now in the very spot which, year after year, through a long life, his “due feet” never failed to tread, as they passed to the scene of his labours, in the sanctuary of God.* His reward is on high. He has left to his bereaved widow and mourning friends, the rich inheritance of an unsullied name. To us he has left, serene in placid piety, his lovely and encouraging example. He rests from his labours, and his works do follow him.

We too, my beloved, let us not forget, we too must follow him. We must stand with him before the judgment bar; and for our improvement of his instructions, of his influence, and of his example, give an account to God. Brethren beloved, are you prepared for that strict reckoning? Is there no precept of his meek and venerable wisdom which you have neglected or disobeyed? Is there no prayer of his fervent piety that you have disappointed and made of none effect? Is there no influence of his holy example that you have overlooked or disregarded? And is there none of you, in regard to whom his testimony must then be borne, “I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and ye would not

* The chief entrance to St. Mary's Church, was, until recently, at the side. In the midst of what was then the pathway, Dr. Wharton lies interred.

regard?" My beloved brethren, think on these things. From that low grave, your venerable pastor, though "dead, yet speaketh." While there is time, listen to his beloved warning voice. Cling, as he clung, to the Cross of Jesus Christ. Make the word of God, as he made it, by day your study, and by night your meditation. Implore daily, as he implored, the transforming influence of the divine grace, to create in you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you. To-day, repent. To-day, believe. To-day, profess before men your solemn dedication of yourselves to God, and in his strength strive to perform its obligations. To-morrow, remember, you may sleep with him in the dark grave. And yet,—think well, beloved, of the dread alternative!—and yet, *not* like him, "in the certain hope of a joyful resurrection!"

APPENDIX.

I.

A POETICAL EPISTLE TO GEORGE WASHINGTON:

FROM A NATIVE OF THE PROVINCE OF MARYLAND.

1778.

Ille Deum vitam accipiet, divisque videbit
Permistas Heroas, et ipse videbitur illis.*

Virgil.

TO THE READER.

THE reader may depend upon the following lines being the genuine production of a native of America. The author is not vain enough to flatter himself that they will throw any fresh lustre on the character of General Washington; or entitle his untutored muse to the smallest share of poetical fame. His sole view in penning this Epistle was to express, in the best manner he was able, the warm feelings of a grateful individual towards that best of men, to whom he, and every American, will, in all likelihood, be principally indebted for the establishment of the independence and commercial prosperity of his country.

While many a servile muse her succour lends
To flatter tyrants, or a tyrant's friends,
While thousands slaughtered at Ambition's shrine
Are made a plea to court the tuneful Nine;

* Another manuscript copy has this motto:

On his aspect shines
Sublimest virtue and desire of fame,
Where Justice gives the laurel; in his eye
The unextinguishable spark, which fires
The souls of patriots; while his brow supports
Undaunted valour, and contempt of death.

Glover's Leonidas.

Whilst Whitehead* lifts his hero to the skies,
Foretells his conquests twice a year, and lies ;
Damns half-starved rebels to eternal shame,
Or paints them trembling at Britannia's name :
Permit an humble bard, great Chief, to raise
One truth-erected trophy to thy praise.
No abject flattery shall these numbers seek,
Nor raise a blush on virtue's modest cheek ;
Call forth to view no great or generous deed
But foes must own, and WASHINGTON may read.
Here, while beside yon venerable wood
My native stream† swells thy Potomac's flood,
These artless lines shall usher in the song
Which future bards in rapture shall prolong.

* * * * *

Hail, happy man, crowned with immortal bays,
Before whose glory sink the fading rays
Of royal pageantry ! Thy generous heart
To Freedom's sons shall still its warmth impart,
Teach them their native dignity to scan,
And scorn the wretch who spurns his fellow man.

* * * * *

Great without pomp, without ambition brave,
Proud, not to conquer fellow-men, but save ;
Friend to the weak, to none a foe but those
Who plan their greatness on their brethren's woes ;
Awed by no titles, faithless to no trust,
Free without faction, obstinately just ;
Warmed by Religion's pure and heavenly ray,
That points to future bliss the certain way,—
Such be my country ! What her sons should be,
O, may they learn, great WASHINGTON, from thee !

* * * * *

* Poet Laureat to his Britannic Majesty, and obliged from his office to find matter of praise for his royal patron twice a year.

† The river Wicomico.

AN ELEGY

TO THE

MEMORY OF MRS. MARY WHARTON,

Who died at Philadelphia, on the second day of June, 1798 ;

BY HER HUSBAND.

"O mihi tum quam molliter ossa quiescant,
Si nostros olim tua fistula dicat amores." *Virgil.*

Sing our past loves, when I am gone, she said ;
Thy tender strains shall cheer my clay-cold bed.
C. H. W.

I

DULL roll the hours, and heavy hangs the day,
Oppress'd with wo my broken spirit lies,
Since my poor heart, to wretchedness a prey,
Heav'd its last sigh o'er Mary's closing eyes.

II

Stretch'd on the rack of thought, my tortured mind
Recalls each image of the doleful scene ;
Nor in the range of nature can it find
One transient ray that borders on serene.

III

Creation's glories, once my keenest joys,
On contemplation's eye unseemly pall,
Ev'n friendship's balm my loathing bosom cloy,
For she is gone who once gave zest to all.

IV

Flow on, ye tears ; pour forth, my wo-worn breast,
O'er the cold clay your unavailing grief ;
For nought but sorrow now can yield me rest,
In nought but tears my heart can find relief.

V

O ye, who fann'd by Hymen's choicest gales
Once floated gaily down the stream of life,
While love's soft breath fill'd all your flowing sails,
And all was harmony, unmix'd with strife :

V I

Say, from your arms did e'er the envious blast
Dash some fond hope beneath a ruthless sea,
Or on rude rocks some darling object cast ?
Then, "if ye lost an angel, pity me."

V I I

For she, alas ! was all to me, and more
Than bright-ey'd fancy's fairest visions show
Of female worth, when she surveys the store,
And culls each antidote to human wo.

V I I I

Soft was her heart, and gentle was her mind,
They taught each wish at virtue's voice to move,
While bounteous heav'n had in her soul combin'd
With duty friendship, and with friendship love.

I X

Thoughtless of self alone, her gen'rous breast
On social duties dwelt with fond delight ;
Each gnawing care found there a place of rest,
Sooth'd by her voice, or melted at her sight.

X

O lovely Mary ! dearer far to me
Than India's wealth, or pleasure's brightest charms,
What can, alas ! supply the loss of thee,
For ever, ever absent from my arms ?

X I

How in this world, to me a desert grown,
Without my heart's best portion can I dwell ?
For me forlorn, forsaken, and alone,
O toll full soon the last sad solemn knell.

X I I

Farewell, bless'd spirit ; and if aught below
Can still to thee a sense of pain impart,
O witness not my agonising wo,
View not the gloom that broods upon my heart.

X I I I

Thus to the winds I breath'd my sad complaint,
Along great Delaware's majestic shore,
'Midst bitter sighs, impatient of restraint,
And rising sorrows still demanding more :

XIV

When on my clouded soul a sudden blaze
 Shed its mild radiance of etherial light,
 Such as a pitying angel oft conveys
 To chase the shades of intellectual night :

XV

Cease, faithful mourner, cease thy doleful strain ;
 A small still voice or said, or seem'd to say ;
 Dar'st thou the all-wise Disposer to arraign ?
 Or with rash grief control his sov'reign sway ?

XVI

Know, then, ("enough on earth for thee to know,")
 Thy Mary lives ; escaped from human sight,
 She soars triumphant over pain and wo,
 And calmly waits thee in the realms of light.

XVII

Each murmur now sunk gently to repose,
 Reluctant nature felt the sweet control,
 What erst was hope, to bright conviction rose,
 And faith's whole radiance burst upon my soul.

C. H. W.

 THE OCEAN.

WRITTEN AT LONG BRANCH, 1799.

Roll on, vast ocean, lash the sounding shore,
 Till earth decay, and time shall be no more,
 Whilst each succeeding wave this truth proclaims,
 That HE whose mighty voice thy fury tames,
 With equal power fierce nations can control
 And hush to calm each passion of the soul.
 O then, whilst ruin, like the unfettered deep,
 O'er half the globe extends its madd'ning sweep,
 Let Him, Columbia, be thy hope and guide,
 That, anchor'd fast, thou may'st securely ride ;
 On His commands, thy laws, thy conduct form,
 Then smile at tempests and defy the storm.

II.

Having been requested, on the death of Dr. Wharton, to prepare and preach a funeral sermon, I applied to Bishop White, as his oldest surviving friend, for information as to the earlier periods of his life. The following is the result :—

“ RT. REV. BISHOP DOANE.

“ *Philadelphia, July 24, 1833.*

“ Rt. Rev. and Dear Sir,

“ You have requested me to furnish you with such memoranda concerning our deceased friend, Dr. Wharton, as may be gathered from the recollection of my long acquaintance with him. I do not know that I can contribute much, in addition to what may be gathered of his useful agency, from our general and diocesan journals. Yet there are a few particulars exterior to them, which you may probably esteem worthy of your attention.

“ The present year is the fiftieth of our intercourse, which began in the month of May, 1784. His introduction to me was by letter, from William Paca, Esq., then Governor of Maryland, and my brother-in-law. Mr. Wharton’s visit to Philadelphia, was for the publication of his well known letter to the Roman Catholics of the city of Worcester. This production was perused by me with great pleasure in manuscript ; and the subject of it caused much conversation between us, during his stay in our city. The result was my entire conviction, that the soundness of his arguments for the change of his religious profession, was fully equalled by the sincerity and the disinterestedness which accompanied the transaction.

“ As you are probably uninformed of the earlier part of the life of our friend, there shall be here introduced some account of it.

“ It is well known, that the earliest emigrants to Maryland, were Roman Catholics, and that they located themselves in the lowest parts of the western shore. Dr. Wharton was a descendant of one of those families. In his boyhood, he was sent by his father to be educated for the priesthood, in the seminary of the Jesuits in Liege.* His father died, leaving him and a younger brother. By the laws of Maryland, the elder became the heir of the landed property, consisting principally

* St. Omer’s. See Memoir.

of a large tract of land in St. Mary's county. The late Col. Richard Heath, uncle of my son's children, informed me that he had been on this farm, and that he did not know a better in the state. The owner of it, on his arriving at legal age, wrote to his brother, that on the condition of his marrying with the consent of Mr. [since Archbishop] Carroll, he would surrender to him the property. The condition was complied with, and the promise was fulfilled.

"Soon after the publications of Dr. Carroll and Dr. Wharton, the former made a visit to this city; the other being also here, and making his stay at my house. Dr. Carroll lodged at the house of Mr. Fitzsimmons, a Roman Catholic gentleman, within a short distance of me. A part of the object of the journey, was to procure an instrument, found to be necessary to complete the title to the tract of land referred to. Dr. Wharton, on hearing of this, repaired to the lodgings of his former ecclesiastical brother—whose desire, in regard to the estate, was complied with. I was gratified by the account given to me by Mrs. Fitzsimmons, of the friendly manner of their meeting.

"Dr. Wharton has informed me, that before his being of age for the ministry, he taught mathematics in the college at Liege. However various his literary attainments, he possessed peculiar aptitude for study in that department, although I do not know of his cultivating it after his settlement in life.

"It was not until after his settlement in Worcester, that he became convinced of the errors of the Roman Catholic Church. Although his change was the result of his own inquiries, yet he must have been encouraged in them, by an acquaintance which he formed with the Rev. John Hawkins; who, having been ordained in the Roman Catholic Church, had renounced communion with it, and had become a clergyman of the Church of England, settled in the vicinity of Worcester. This gentleman wrote a vindication of Dr. Wharton's Letter, in answer to the attacks on it in England. I possess his work; as also another of the same author, in defence of the marriage of the clergy.

"In the month which witnessed the beginning of my acquaintance with Dr. Wharton, there was held the clerical meeting in New Brunswick, which led to the organizing of our Church throughout the Union. He was not present at it; but he was sent a deputy to the meeting of October, in the same year, held in New-York, which we consider the first of our General Conventions. In August, 1786, he attended that held in this city; and in October of the same year, immediately before the embarkation to England for consecration, there

was his aid in the Convention of Delaware, where he had become resident.

“In the first Convention held after the obtaining of the Episcopacy, (1789,) his agency was very efficient in the review of the Book of Common Prayer. For his participation in our succeeding councils, I refer you, agreeably to an intimation in the beginning, to our journals.

“It was a remarkable fact in the character of the deceased, that from the beginning to the end of my acquaintance with him, he was a decided advocate of the Jesuits, with the exception of the tenets of the Roman Catholic creed. In argument, he was prepared at all points in any controversy concerning them, touching the crimes with which they are charged.

“The above is all that I judged to be necessary in compliance with your request ; and I remain, respectfully,

Your affectionate brother,

WILLIAM WHITE.”

“P. S. Soon after his introduction to me, he informed me, that some time before, he had been visited by a protracted nervous fever, which had left its effects on his constitution. He said that he occasionally felt them, whenever he devoted himself intensely and too long to study. All his intimate friends have witnessed how much he was incommoded by this visitation ; and I have often wondered that under it, otherwise in health and spirits, he attained to so great an age. His dissolution now admonishes the survivor, who has recorded the preceding facts, and who has reached about the same time of life—‘be thou also ready.’”

III.

Of the three following notices of the Rev. Dr. Wharton, the first was written, by the author of the Memoir, for the Episcopal Recorder; the second appeared originally in the Philadelphia Daily Chronicle, and was afterwards privately circulated in a pamphlet form; and the third is taken from the Churchman.

OBITUARY.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Died, at the Rectory, on Tuesday morning, July 22d, the Rev. CHARLES HENRY WHARTON, D. D. Rector of St. Mary's Church, Burlington, New-Jersey, in the 86th year of his age, the 61st of his ministry, and the 36th of his Rectorship—the senior presbyter of the American Protestant Episcopal Church.

Charles Henry Wharton was born at Notley Hall, in St. Mary's county, Maryland, on the 25th of May, O. S., A. D. 1748. His ancestors were Roman Catholics; and the family residence, so named from a former Governor of that province, was presented to his grandfather by Lord Baltimore. His mother, whose family was also among the original settlers, he described as "a woman of sweet manners, and uncommon beauty." He is to be added, on his own testimony, to the host of great and good men, whose greatness and goodness, under God, are due to a mother's precepts, piety, and prayers. At the age of seven years he was attacked by a dog, and rescued providentially by his father's singular promptness of action, who, seizing a gun, shot the furious animal, while the child's head was yet in his jaws. In 1760, then in his twelfth year, he was sent to the English Jesuits' College, at St. Omer's. He remained here, availing himself of its great advantages, two years; when the College was broken up by the suppression of the order. He then removed with the teachers and pupils of the College to Bruges, where, under the tuition of the Rev. Edmund Walsh, a learned and excellent man, of whom he never ceased to speak with deep affection, he pursued his scholastic education. Some subsequent years he spent at Liege, partly as a scholar, and partly in giving instruction in mathematics, in which science he was a great proficient.

He was also, (so far are these branches of learning from being incompatible,) a classical scholar of the very highest order; and, it may be added, a writer of elegant verses. In short, the present writer has never met with one who exemplified in so many departments the richest, ripest, and most accomplished scholarship.

Mr. Wharton's letters of orders as sub-deacon, deacon, and priest, are all dated in 1772. The breaking out of the war of the American Revolution kept him unwillingly in Europe. He resided chiefly at Worcester, England, as Chaplain to the Roman Catholics of that city. His heart was true and warm in his country's cause. He wrote at this time a poetical epistle to General Washington, which had the rare fortune to be read in manuscript by Sir William Jones. The original, with suggested alterations in the hand writing of that distinguished man, is still preserved. The poem, with a sketch of General Washington's character, was published in England, and sold for the benefit of the American prisoners. In the year 1782, his mind is known to have been much distressed on the subject of his religious creed.

He returned to this country in the first vessel after the peace; and visited Philadelphia in May, 1784, for the purpose of publishing his celebrated letter to the Roman Catholics of the city of Worcester. "This production," says one, whose authority as a scholar and divine is surpassed only by his excellence as a Christian, the venerable Bishop WHITE, "was perused by me with great pleasure in manuscript; and the subject of it caused much conversation during his stay in our city. The result was my entire conviction that the soundness of his arguments for the change of his religious profession was fully equalled by the sincerity and disinterestedness which accompanied the transaction." Another occasion will be taken to speak more fully on this subject. No one who knew the stern integrity of Dr. Wharton's character, and his extremely delicate sensibilities, will question, however strong its language, the truth of his own declaration, that by the mental anxiety which accompanied that change, it nearly cost him his life. The first approaches to conviction he firmly resisted, and yielded only to compulsion. The transition, so painful in its process, was most thorough in its result. The subject of it fulfilled the precept of our SAVIOUR to St. Peter, "when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." His controversial work is a standard authority. An English clergyman, second to none in his acquaintance with books, lately spoke of it in a letter to the present writer, as among the very best on that subject. It was characteristic with Dr. Wharton, the most amiable and honourable of men, and it ought to be received as no common evidence of since-

riety, that though he so thoroughly renounced the errors of the Church of Rome, he never denounced its members. His reverence for its great lights was unfeigned. Of Archbishop Carroll, his antagonist in controversy, as he was his kinsman according to the flesh, he spoke, to the very last, with warm affection. Of the society of Jesuits, (rejecting of course the errors of their creed,) he was uniformly the bold and able champion, and he reprobated the dissolution of their order as among the foulest stains on the history of the Roman Church. A striking instance of his generosity should be here recorded. As elder son he inherited the ancestral estate. On taking orders in the Roman Church, he conveyed it to his brother. Long after he had renounced the errors of that Church, it was discovered that the conveyance was not complete. He immediately executed a sufficient instrument, and thus for the second time alienated a most valuable property, his only earthly possession.

After his return to America, he resided for one year at the family mansion. He was after that Rector of Emanuel Church, New-Castle, Delaware; then he officiated in the Swedish Church, at Wilmington; and thence removed, in 1798, to Burlington. In 1801, he was unanimously elected President of Columbia College, in the city of New-York, which office, after attending one commencement, he resigned. He was also urged to accept the Presidency of the College at Beaufort, South Carolina, with the Rectorship of the parish, but declined the offer. He was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society, under the presidency of Dr. Franklin. He was many years a trustee of Princeton College: and at the establishment of the General Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church, he was nominated to one of the first professorships. In his pastoral relation, Dr. Wharton was loved, respected, and confided in as the father of all the people of his charge. The whole community in which he lived esteemed him as their friend. Indeed, he must have been a singularly bad man who was Dr. Wharton's enemy.

Notwithstanding his advanced years, and a very feeble constitution, Dr. Wharton retained his powers of intellect until the last. His last ministrations in his parish were on Whitsunday, May 26, when he preached, and administered the holy communion. His last public act was his attendance at the Convention of the Diocese of New-Jersey, at Camden, on the 29th of May; when, by the animation of his countenance and manner, the earnestness with which he engaged in the several discussions, and the manly and vigorous support which he gave to the measures proposed by the Bishop, he seemed like a man of less

than half his years. He had no violent disease, but rather sank from the inability of his constitution to rally its enfeebled energies. In his whole sickness he was perfectly resigned and tranquil. He put not his trust in any thing that he had done. His sole glory was in the Cross of Jesus Christ. His testimony to the power and excellence of the Gospel was full, explicit, and affecting. It was the triumph of a true and living faith. It left nothing to be desired but grace to imitate it, and to follow him, as he was the follower of Christ. Sinking gradually day by day, he, at last, fell tranquilly asleep, and rests with God. The funeral service at his interment, was performed by the Bishop of the Diocese, and was attended by the patriarchal Bishop White, who had been nearly fifty years his friend; by a number of the clergy of New-Jersey and Pennsylvania; by his weeping congregation; and by the whole community, uniting to honour him dead, whom living they had loved. By his will, of which the Bishop of the Diocese is executor, he has given his library to the parish of St. Mary's, and at the decease of his widow \$1,000 to the General Missionary Society, and the residue of his estate, (having left no children,) as a fund to increase the salary of the rector of St. Mary's.

In Dr. Wharton there was a rare combination of great and varied excellencies. In purity of mind and heart he was almost like an infant. His character was transparent in its beautiful simplicity. He was a personification of that loveliest attribute of love, "*charity thinketh no evil.*" Among the very first, (by confession of all,) of American divines, revered and honoured by all who ever knew him, he was the humblest and most diffident of men. He seemed not only unconscious of his distinction, but incapable of its consciousness. There was in him, as nearly as in humanity there can be, an absorption of the principle of self. He had literally learned, in whatsoever state he was, to be therewith content. To all mankind his heart overflowed with kindness and charity. He was emphatically a man of peace. His charities were constant, generous, and unostentatious. He was the most tender and affectionate of husbands. Constitutionally reserved, and rendered more so by education and early habits, he associated intimately with but few. To them he was the most agreeable of companions and the most engaging of friends. He was the lover of little children, and of course beloved by them. In sickness and in sorrow he was prompt and assiduous as the minister of consolation. The poor rise up and call him blessed. The tears of a whole congregation were mingled in his grave.

While his rich and varied learning made him the most delightful

and instructive of companions, his wonderful simplicity was an effectual preservative from dogmatism and pedantry. With a true Christian devotion he had consecrated it all to God. He might have shone in science, distinguished himself as a classical scholar, or given delight as a poet. He chose to be known only as a divine. He brought his great learning, his sound wisdom, his singular moderation, to excellent use in the first counsels of our infant Church. To him, it is here stated on the authority of Bishop White, the revision of our Liturgy is much indebted. In the General and Diocesan Conventions he was always present and always useful. His last duty was performed at the Convention of the Diocese in May; thus dying, as it were, in the service of that Church, to which he had devoted so long a life.

As a preacher of the Gospel Dr. Wharton was always instructive, always persuasive. His sermons were in a chastened style of oratory, evidently written from the heart, and with a diction like chrystal for purity and perspicuity. He always preached Christ crucified. The Cross was the great central light of his system, both in faith and morals. The sinfulness and helplessness of man, salvation by grace through faith, the necessity of a new creation unto holiness, and the agency of the Divine Spirit in producing it, were his prevailing themes. Thus setting up the Cross, it was his purpose and his habit to set it up ever in the Church. He was indeed kindly affectionate to all of every name, and would gladly have gathered, by any compromise but that of principle, the pious of other denominations into the fold of the Church. Later experience rendered him more cautious than he once had been. He became more and more the admirer and the advocate of the primitive principles and intrepid policy which have been identified with the immortal name of HOBART. He again and again expressed his conviction that the entire Church was to be inviolately preserved; and that the strictest adherence to all its provisions and regulations was the surest path, not only of truth and duty, but of charity and peace.

The religion which Dr. Wharton proclaimed with his voice and defended with his pen, was the actuating principle of his life, as it was his stay and solace in death. It gave him the victory over himself, and that achieved, all other conquests were easy. The Cross in which he gloried, had crucified the world to him and him unto the world. His piety was deep, fervent, and unostentatious. The aliment on which it fed was the pure word of God. It was enkindled in him by the Holy Spirit. It was sustained and cherished by daily intercourse with heaven. He was punctual every day in self-examination, and secret medi-

tation and prayer. These he regarded as the means, and not the end of religion. This he ever strove to manifest in love to God and love to man. And through Christ strengthening him, it was the experience of his life, as it was the testimony of his death, that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and grace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

A

SHORT MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. C. H. WHARTON, D. D.

THE late Dr. Wharton was born in the year 1746 or 7, in one of the three lower counties, now Delaware,—or perhaps in the contiguous territory of Maryland, on the peninsula.* The neighbourhood of his nativity was distinguished, not more by the wealth and general worth of its gentry, than by their natural talent and literary acquirements. The time, too, appears to have been propitious to the production and improvement of intellectual power. The gentlemen of "the Eastern shore" were regarded as among the most polished scholars of our country, and were highly distinguished in the Provincial Councils and Legislatures as statesmen and orators—and even at this day, the NAME of several of the old families is a distinction certainly not less respectable, than the quartering of arms with an ancient house might be elsewhere, and more so than the inheritance of riches ought to be anywhere.

It is presumed, that the Doctor's parentage was of the Roman Catholic persuasion, which was that of the first settlers of Maryland—and long continued to prevail—since, after passing through his early preparatory studies at home, he was placed in a distinguished Catholic Seminary on the European Continent; and it may be inferred from the same circumstance, connected with his subsequent actual engagement, that he was destined at an early age for the sacred ministry of that Church, in which he continued to officiate, it is supposed, until about the year 1782.

* St. Mary's county, Maryland. See Memoir.

It was about this period, that, after a diligent investigation, and, it will not be doubted, under the impulse of honest, conscientious conviction, against every early prepossession, he renounced the Church of his youthful years. This startling disruption of the strong ties of feeling and affection towards a form of faith, drawn in with his mother's milk, which had been strengthened by education, and fostered by the prospects of early advancement, and in the meanwhile, the possession of flattering consideration, naturally drew on him the anathema of the Church, and the displeasure of his former brethren. A controversy ensued, in which her infallibility, transubstantiation, and other peculiar tenets were discussed with freedom and great ability. A large portion of the religious world were lookers on, and very many manifested deep interest in this polemical combat, to which, although two chief champions only appeared in the arena, each was probably cheered by able men, who stood in the circle of spectators, and both drew their weapons from the most approved armories. It is not for us, at this day, to award the laurel to the victor; but, of this we feel assured, that our deceased friend not only shook from him, with adroitness, the light missiles thrown in form of imputations of unworthy motives to his religious conversion, but established a high reputation for his general ability as a writer, and as a learned and profound theologian. That he convinced his learned and able opponent, cannot be supposed. That he made converts among others, will not be asserted. But, that he became more and more confirmed in the correctness of his own views, and the rectitude of his own motives, which is far better than external plaudits, we will venture to affirm, from our strong conviction of his sincerity. The merits of the controversy were exhausted, and Dr. W. stood forth confessedly an able champion of Protestantism.

It was not long after this, that Dr. Wharton was received as a minister of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* And in this ministry—never courting, but shunning stations which might have flattered personal vanity, and given occasions for display and popular notoriety, he continued until the day of his death—ever the faithful and affectionate friend, and spiritual pastor of a RURAL flock.

* * * * *

Dr. Wharton's conversation was remarkable for classical raciness, not less than for its other agreeable qualities. With the elegance of

* Liberty has been taken to make a slight alteration here, to bring the statement into more literal agreement with the facts. G. W. D.

the scholar who had closely studied the works of the poets and orators of ancient Greece and Rome, and made himself familiar with the best English writers; he combined the courteousness of the *gentleman of the old school*—and, what some may think extraordinary, he would talk sensibly and profitably with an unlettered neighbour for hours without ever incurring the suspicion of being himself LEARNED. He could be playful or profound, witty or wise, as occasion suited. In some of these particulars he resembled the late Dr. Nesbit, with perhaps more of refinement; and in force, Dr. Andrews, of revered memory, who had much of the intellectual power, if not the varied excellence of Johnson, without his overbearing roughness. As a Belles Lettres scholar indeed it is thought there was not one among us Dr. W.'s equal. Still, with all this superiority, he was ever amiable, modest, and gracious. Strife and contention, cabal and intrigue, were not among the elements of his character—and this is the more remarkable, because it might have been expected, as it too often happens, that, having once engaged in polemic warfare, and come off, at least, with applause, he would have contracted a morbid passion for dispute and controversy. But, wherever he found himself in their presence, he was prompt to retire, thinking peace and charity were too costly a price to pay for the attainment of any worldly purpose, or petty triumph. And the same amiable disposition marked his conduct even in minor matters. He would smile at inflated vanity; yet, if he discovered that *self-complacency* was the only or most highly valued possession of an individual, he was careful not to trespass on it. “Why should I strive to make any man a pauper?” His friends indeed often wondered how it could be, that a man so well qualified to pronounce judgment, should be so free from positiveness, but he considered that to be the perquisite of folly.

His sermons were distinguished by richness of thought, and by grace and simplicity of language, modelled after those of the best of the old English divines. The Christian scholar who could relish the compositions of Tillotson and Addison enjoyed a rich treat in those of Dr. Wharton—and his discourses were intelligible to the meanest capacity. Virtue and religion were presented by him in simple attire, and seemed to win the affections of his hearers, and recommend themselves to their judgment so obviously and naturally, as to make assent unavoidable. In his pulpit, there were no prodigious efforts of logical argument; no cataracts of oratory; none of the throes and convulsive spasms of the pathetic; no sparkling passages *ad captandum*; no affectation of the technicalities of elocution; little gesticulation, and

that natural ; but all flowed smoothly onward—the mind and the affections carried, with gentle persuasion, to just conclusions. The congregation were convinced, and felt their own improvement ; but were likely to attribute the triumph and the gain more to the power of truth than to any skill of the preacher. They felt as if they must have often thought as he did—so justly, so naturally, so reasonably—and wondered only how they could have suffered themselves to fall short in performance. It was not, however, that he was unacquainted with any of the assistances of art. He knew them all thoroughly, (though they were not always at the TIP OF HIS TONGUE, OR HIS FINGER'S END,) and which of them found their proper place in the college valedictory ; and he knew well, too, the value of the adage of a great master—“*ars est celare artem.*”

Here, too, his modesty was exemplary. The use of the first personal pronoun, in either number, was rarely, if ever, adopted by him ; even when seniority entitled him to rank and privilege. It was not his practice to preach as from himself, *ex cathedra*, but in matters of faith he avouched the Scriptures, and on questions of worship or discipline, the authority of the Church. Nor would he affect to magnify his ministerial responsibility, although deeply impressed with its extent and graveness, because he knew that it must be limited (like every other) to a faithful and conscientious performance of duty ; that it could neither add to, nor diminish, the obligations to righteousness on others, and might be construed into an assumption of more than he was willing to take upon himself, or than ought to be conceded to man. At the foundation of these perfections as a preacher, there were natural talent, education, good sense, a well regulated temper, and, above all, SINCERE and UNAFFECTED PIETY.

In his social intercourse, Dr. Wharton did not suffer the spirit of sectarianism to have entrance. His rule of conduct seems to have been that of his friend and cotemporary, the venerable father of our Church : “To treat every denomination in their character as a body with respect ; and the individuals composing it with degrees of respect, or of esteem, or of affection, in proportion to the ideas entertained of their respective merits.” Nor was he in any way obnoxious to the charge of a bigotted attachment to his own communion. Believing a liturgy to be sanctioned by divine ordinance, by the example of our Saviour and his Apostles, and by the usage of the primitive Church, he was decidedly in favour of one ; yet he did not permit himself to judge harshly of “the public prayers of our fellow-Christians.” So, also, on the subject of Episcopacy, which is affirmed by the Church

to "rest on scriptural institution, and to have subsisted from the beginning." Like the same venerated Prelate, he pronounced no judgment on the varying governments of other societies, ever loyal and faithful to his own. And the beautiful effect of this forbearance and charity was displayed, not only in his intimacies with many pious persons of various sects, but on the occasion of his interment, which was attended by a throng of friends and neighbours, without religious distinction, gathered together by a spontaneous feeling of respect and affection.

Such was Dr. Wharton.—But how imperfect the portraiture!—How short of the living man!—The expectation was entertained that his memory would be adequately commemorated by a clerical brother, better provided with materials, and far more competent to the task. The hope is cherished that this will yet be done. In the meanwhile, this sketch—rude as it is—is thrown out by a LAY hand. Posthumous respect is the privilege and the duty of friendship, and good example is a valuable legacy never to be disregarded. In this case, the exhibition of it is the more proper, considering the retiring modesty of the living individual, who never set up his candle on high.

After no protracted illness—perhaps from the mere decay of nature—in the 86th year of his age—his intellect hardly dimmed—strong in faith, firm in hope, and rooted in charity—this amiable and virtuous man expired at the Parsonage House, close by the Church where he had officiated for many years, on Tuesday, the 23d day of July, A. D. 1833. And in the cemetery of the same Church his remains were deposited on the Thursday following, in the presence of a weeping flock, and of numerous friends from near and from afar, all "*sorrowing most of all that they should see his face no more.*"

A LAYMAN.

Philadelphia, August 1st, 1833.

CHARLES HENRY WHARTON,

Departed this life, July 23, 1833, at the parsonage in Burlington, N. J. in the 86th year of his age.

It has pleased Almighty God to release from the cares and troubles of this world, one of his most aged servants in the Church. To those who knew this individual, their own minds will recall the virtues of his character more strongly than these reminiscences. To those who did

not, words will convey but an imperfect idea. This, however, will not deter one who has passed some pleasant moments in his society, and and who remembers with interest his delightful conversation, from giving some short notice of his character.

He was a scholar and a gentleman, with a mind like his manners pure and polished as Italian marble, but without its coldness. His opportunities had been of the best sort, and improved with the greatest judgment; the beauties of ancient learning, and the advantages of the best society, modern literature, and unwearied diligence—"insight both of books and men,"—conspired to render him elegant, delightful, and instructive. His mind was stored with the treasures of classical latinity, and often he would be heard during his morning walks repeating to himself passages which the occasions suggested. It seemed indeed, as though they were the *emanations* of his *own mind*, and almost incorporated with his own thoughts, always ready, always appropriate—so much at home was he with them. Till his last days he retained the habits of a student, and it may be said of him, as was said of Lake in the days of Charles I., that "whoso found him at home, found him in his student's gown engaged in the labours of the study."

He had been in the best literary society of England, and was connected with some of the most eminent individuals of America. In company he was delightful—so perfectly finished, so thoroughly polite,

"In every family

Throughout his fold was he the welcome guest,
Alike to every generation dear,
The children's favourite and the grandsire's friend,
Tried, trusted, and beloved :"—

so cheerful, (but it was the "mirth which aye with sober *wisdom* well accords,") that instruction was joined with pleasure, and satisfaction was mingled with delight. Though his disposition would have inclined him to make the pilgrimage of life in peace, yet he was among those who, "when constrained to wield the sword of warfare," never shrank from the contest; but *his* sword was part of the Christian armour, wielded by a Christian hand, and for a Christian purpose. His controversy on the errors of the Romish Church shows, that the strongest argument may be clothed in the mildest language, and that the weapon which cuts with the keenest stroke, may sometimes bear the highest polish.

Other publications have been the fruit of his labour; and some stanzas of poetry have shown that even in this department his genius “neque incultum fuit, neque turpiter hirtum.”

But of his various compositions, his pulpit exercises, though not the most popular, were perhaps the most elegant; and it may be well worth consideration, if the interests of religion and literature might not successfully be advanced by a judicious selection and publication.

Such is a *sketch* of his character. He ministered in the parish of St. Mary's for upwards of thirty years; and though the accents of his voice are now as the silence of the grave, and though they who have heard his counsels will hear them no more, yet his memory will long remain, and the admiration of his virtues will increase with time.

X. X.

S E R M O N S .

S E R M O N I.

T H E I N C A R N A T I O N .

AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US, AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY, THE GLORY AS OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.—*John. i. 14.*

THE Temple built by Zerubbabel, after the Jewish captivity, drew tears from those, who remembered to have seen the former superb edifice, in all its splendour. In order to console them, a Prophet was sent from God, to assure them, “that the glory of this latter house should be greater than of the former, for in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.”* Now this promise was never accomplished in a literal sense: for the second Temple, even when augmented and ornamented by Herod the Great, never equalled the first, either in the costliness of its materials, or the beauty and magnificence of its structure. To the first Temple, moreover, belonged many splendid advantages which the second did not possess. The ark of the covenant, with the tables of the law, the *Urim* and *Thummim*, the fire from heaven, which consumed the sacrifices, the cloud which filled the Holy of Holies, and the spirit of Prophecy; all of them august symbols of the immediate presence, and protection of God, disappeared with the first Temple, and seemed to be buried under its ruins. This circumstance proved always very embarrassing to the Jews, and nothing could

* Haggai, ii. 9.

be more frivolous than their manner of avoiding it. Some said that the glory of the second Temple consisted in its continuing ten years longer than the first. But can we believe that the following lofty expressions of the Almighty pointed only at ten years longer duration of an edifice: "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land And I will fill this house with glory The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former."* Others suppose that this promise relates to a third temple which shall be built hereafter. But this idea involves a manifest absurdity, as the text is speaking of a second temple which they were actually building at that time. Let us, then, adopt some more sublime interpretation, and more becoming the elevated phraseology of the Prophet. Let us say, without hesitation, that the glory of the *second* house was transcendently greater than that of the *first*, inasmuch as it was favoured with the precious and inestimable privilege of receiving the Messiah, the Son of God, and the desired of all nations, within its walls. He truly, by his divine presence, filled it with glory; and there it was that he delivered the sublime lessons of salvation. It was this glorious event, which the Prophet had in view, and of which St. John declares the accomplishment, in the text. The *incarnation*, therefore, *of the Word*, or the Logos, and *his dwelling among us*, are the two prominent objects presented to our minds in the text. At present, we will confine our reflections to the first of these objects, namely, the *incarnation* of the Logos, or Word of God, reserving the consideration of his *dwelling among us*, to a future discourse.

I. *The Word was made flesh*. In treating on these words, we will consider, *first*, who he is that is designated by the

* Haggai, ii. 6, &c.

Word, or Logos; and, afterwards, treat briefly of the mystery itself.

By the *Word*, or *Logos*, St. John undoubtedly means Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, or as the text has it, "the only begotten of the Father." The precise reason, why he is styled the Word of God, is not quite certain. Some think that the name alludes to the first chapter of Genesis, where God is represented as creating all things by his word. "He said, let there be light, and there was light." They contend that St. John clears up in this passage, the mysterious meaning of Moses, who intended to assert the co-operation of the Son of God in the creation of the universe. It might not be advisable to reject this interpretation, but it does not appear entirely satisfactory. We should rather be inclined to the opinion of those, who conjecture that St. John styles Jesus Christ the Word, for the two following reasons. The first is, that the Jews very frequently designate the Messiah by this name. Thus the Chaldaic Paraphrast, explaining these words, "The Lord said unto my Lord,"* uses this paraphrase: "The Eternal said to his Word, or Logos, sit thou at my right hand." Another reason for adopting this word might have arisen from a desire of exposing and refuting the absurdities of the Gnosticks, who about this time, as some learned men suppose, began to disfigure the Christian doctrine by mixing up with it the crude imaginations of certain Platonic philosophers, or Cabalistic Jews. These heretics had indulged in a conceit that there existed a genealogy of subaltern divinities, proceeding from each other, and which they denominated *Æons*. Among these *Æons*, they imagined the principal to be the *Life*, the *Word*, the *Light*, the *Only begotten*, and the *Plenitude*. This absurd doctrine, St. John thought fit to dissipate by the rays of sober truth, and declares that there is no other *Word*, except that which *was in the beginning*

* Psalm xc.

with God, and was God; that in this *Word* was life, and the life was the light of men; and in him is the fulness of grace and truth." That this *Word*, or *Logos*, is the real Messiah, uniting in himself all the glorious titles which the Gnosticks bestowed on their imaginary *Æons*. But whatever may have induced St. John to bestow this appellation on Christ, certain it is, that he is designated by it.

1. Let us pass on to more important considerations. In the first place, we may remark, that *the Word which was made flesh*, implies evidently a Person, so that no interpretation of the text can be more forced and unnatural, than that of Socinus and his followers, who pretend that the *Word*, or *Logos*, was merely an attribute of the Deity. It is, say they, the *reason*, or the *wisdom* of God, which in an abundant measure, was communicated to Jesus Christ; or, according to others, it was in a metaphorical sense, the heavenly doctrine of the Gospel, which Jesus Christ, as the interpreter of the divine will, taught and published to the world. But can, indeed, such a meaning be supported? Can it be made to harmonize with the express declaration of St. John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God?" Can this expression be supposed to signify, that in the beginning the intellect and wisdom of God was *with*, or *in* God? Can any person be ignorant, that God always possessed intelligence and wisdom, or could he have existed without these perfections? Is it possible that the Apostle should have been at the pains of mentioning truth so plain and obvious? Besides, is it correct to say, that the intelligence and wisdom of God is God himself? His attributes, indeed, are inseparable from his essence; but neither of them can be styled the Eternal Godhead, much less can it be said, that any divine attribute was incarnate and was *made flesh*.

But they say, moreover, that when St. John tells us "in the *beginning* was the Word," he means only the *beginning*

of the Gospel, which being the Word of God, was hidden in him before Christ was commissioned to announce and manifest it to the world. Alas! to what absurdities does a departure from the obvious meaning of the Scriptures, and an obstinate adherence to a system, give rise! "In the beginning was the Word. All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made that was made." Now, who will say that these words do not refer to the creation of the world? Who can imagine that a divinely inspired writer would thus have expressed himself: "In the beginning of the Evangelical doctrine, this doctrine was?" In a word, was this doctrine God himself? Did it become incarnate? Was it made flesh, and did it dwell among men? Evidently, then, all these expressions refer to a Person, and by no means to a simple attribute of the Deity, or to a word assuming a metaphorical meaning.

2. We may observe, secondly, that this Word, or Person, who was thus made flesh, existed previously to his incarnation. St. John tells us that he was *in the beginning*, and this *beginning* means the creation of the world. Besides, when it is said, that the Word was made flesh, does not this necessarily imply a previous existence of this Word? Here is conclusive evidence that Jesus Christ, here designated by the Word, or Logos, had a real existence before he was born of the Virgin Mary; and he assures us himself, that *before Abraham, he was*; or as St. Paul expresses it, before "taking the form of a servant, he was in the form of God." Holy Scripture, therefore, clearly informs us, that "his goings forth are from everlasting."

3. We remark, in the third place, that the Word, which *was in the beginning, and was made flesh*, is not a created Being, but a divine Person. St. John says expressly, *the Word was God*. To him he attributes the creation of the universe: "All things were made by him. He was life, and the life was the light of *men*; the true light, that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the

world, and the world was made by him." Now could all this be said of any but a Divine Being? Could the holy Evangelist have expressed himself, in these terms, concerning Christ, had he been only a man, or an angel? Would he not have led us into a fatal and inevitable error, by investing him with all the attributes, by ascribing to him all the glory belonging to the Deity?

4. Finally, we may observe, that the Word which was made flesh, is the second Person of the adorable Trinity. The ancient and modern disciples of Sabellius, who pretend that no distinct Persons exist in the Godhead, that God is called the *Father* in heaven, the *Son* on earth, and the *Holy Ghost*, when he communicates his gifts to man, depart very essentially from the express language of Scripture, which in many passages speaks decidedly of three distinct and divine Persons, exercising distinct powers in the economy and government of the universe. They are mentioned so explicitly, that one of them can never be said to be the other. We acknowledge that the human mind cannot point out in what this distinction consists, nor pierce the veil that hangs over this awful mystery. But we know, that Christ said to his disciples,* "*I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.*" And again,† "*when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.*" Here we clearly perceive a manifest distinction between the three divine Persons, for never can it be said, that he who *proceedeth*, and is *sent*, can be the Person who *sends* and *produces* this procession. With respect to the Father and the Son, this distinction of their persons, appears also evident from the text, "*the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.*" Now the only Son of

* John, iv. 16.

† Ibid. xv.

the Father cannot surely be the Father himself. This great mystery, so explicitly announced by St. John, was taught with equal perspicuity in the Apostolic Epistles, the Acts, and the Revelation. St. Paul begins his Epistle to the Hebrews with these words: "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." He then styles him "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." Now, can the Father appoint himself *the heir of all things*, or can he be the *brightness of his own glory*, or *the express image of his own person*? Yet such absurdities must follow from a denial of Christ's divinity, and from a rejection of the holy Trinity.

II. But let us presume humbly to approach this adorable mystery a little nearer, by dwelling more fully on the text. "The Word was made flesh." That is to say, he took human nature upon him, with all its innocent infirmities; he became really and truly a human being. Saturninus, the disciple of Simon the Magician, was one of the first who questioned this truth. He maintained that the Word, or Logos, assumed nothing more than an appearance of flesh. Marcion and Appelles imagined that the body of Christ was very different from that of other men; that it was formed from the substance of the Deity; that it came down from heaven, and partook, in no manner, of the nature of his mother. Appollinarius allowed that Christ had a real human body, but contended that his soul was divine. Thus has the spirit of error been ever busy, and persevering, in undermining this foundation, on which the whole system of man's redemption is built. But the Bible must be discarded before this rock of ages can be shaken. Is he not called *Man*, and the Son of Man, the Son of David, and the Son of Mary? *The Word was made flesh*, says the text. How

can *flesh* mean a phantom, a shadow, or appearance of humanity? "God sent his Son," says St. Paul, "made of a woman," and, of course, a partaker of her substance. And, as if to place the whole matter beyond a doubt, St. Paul tells us,* that "forasmuch as children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same." And again,† "For we have not a High Priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." If these passages do not assert that Jesus Christ was a real man, with all his natural properties, then is there nothing certain in the Scriptures. But this truth, he was pleased to confirm expressly himself: "Handle me, and see," says he to his doubting disciples, "for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."‡ He informs us, moreover, that he had a human soul united to his body. "My soul," says he, in the garden of Gethsemane, "is sorrowful even unto death." Now, could any divine substance, or principle, suffer sorrow, or pain? Like other men, he was subject to all the wants, to all the innocent passions of mortality, to hunger, and to thirst, to sleep, to grief, and apprehension. In a word, he left this world, like other mortals, through the portals of death. From all these circumstances, it appears quite evident, that Jesus Christ was a real man of the same substance and nature with ourselves.

We may observe, still further, that when assuming our nature, he chose a state of indigence and obscurity, and it was probably on this account that St. John, instead of merely saying that he became *man*, uses the word *flesh*, as conveying an idea of weakness, humiliation, and sorrow. And indeed, "He who was in the form of God, took upon him the form of a servant." He appeared not on earth in the character of a conqueror, but was born in a stable, and lived in poverty, and had not where to lay his head. If some rays of

* Heb. ii. 14.

† Ibid. iv. 15.

‡ Luke, xxiv. 39.

his glory occasionally burst forth from the sublimity of his doctrine, and the potency of his miracles, they were veiled, as it were, under his outward appearance, and were duly appreciated by those only who could view them with the eye of their minds. For they, who beheld him only with the eye of *flesh*, discovered in him "no form, nor comeliness, no beauty, that we should desire him. He was a man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men, and acquainted with grief."* He was insulted, condemned, and dragged to punishment, and expired on a cross between two malefactors. Such was the decree of the Eternal, founded in justice and mercy, to open to sinful man the road to final happiness. Such was the costly price of his redemption. It was the obedience of Christ unto death, even the death of the cross, that was to supply the deficiency of man's highest moral exertions. "He took upon him the form of a servant, he was made flesh." This is truly a very extraordinary expression. Did, then, the Eternal Word, or Logos, change his nature? By becoming man, did he cease to be God? Did his humanity absorb, or annihilate his divinity? Far be such an idea from the mind of every Christian. It was not in virtue of any change, but by an ineffable union, that "the Word was made flesh." The Divinity is immutable, "with him there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning." The perfections which constitute his essence must ever remain the same; and yet we are assured that this divine Word became actually united to all the properties of human nature. Nestorius, a famous patriarch of Constantinople, was accused of having taught that there were, in Jesus Christ, two distinct persons. One of them, a divine person, which is the *Logos*, or *the Son* of God, and the other a human person, or the *Son of Mary*; that these two persons had associated in an intimate union for accomplishing, together, the redemption of mankind; the one as a

* Isaiah, liii. 2, 3.

principal, and the other as a subordinate agent. Whether or not this was the opinion of Nestorius, upon which writers do not agree, yet certain it is that it is altogether unscriptural. The Word is always mentioned as an individual person, and to him, as such, are many things attributed, which could not be affirmed but of one of his natures. Thus, for instance, it is written,* “Feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” We perceive immediately that this refers only to the human nature of the Redeemer, who as man only could shed his blood for the purchase of his Church. But if there were two persons in Jesus Christ, this manner of speaking would be not only improper, but utterly unintelligible. Nor would St. John have expressed himself more clearly in the words of the text, “That the Word was made flesh;” an expression, which while we avoid carrying it to an unwarrantable extent, we must be careful never to weaken. It was adopted by the Apostle to denote the strict and intimate union of the two natures in Christ, by which we are authorized truly to pronounce, of this person, that he is, at the same time, both God and man. God, in one respect, and man in another; as it is said of man that he is both a *spiritual* and *material* being. *Spiritual* in respect to his soul, and *material* with respect to his body. Nor can any absorption of one nature into another be implied by this union. Man is a compound of soul and body, two substances essentially different from each other, and ever remaining distinct in all their properties. The body does not *think*, or *reason*, neither does the soul *eat* or *drink*; and yet these functions are performed by the same individual person. And this is nearly the case with the person of Christ; except, however, that his divinity feels none of the weaknesses of human nature, neither can this, on the other hand, share in the incommunicable perfections of the Deity. The attribute of ubiquity, or

* Acts, xx. 28.

omnipresence, is incompatible with his humanity ; and his divine nature can neither suffer or die.

We are fully sensible, that in treating on this sublime subject, we must necessarily express ourselves very imperfectly. The incarnation of the Son of God is a fathomless mystery, which, while it necessarily involves a great degree of obscurity, does not prevent us from entertaining some precise ideas concerning it. We are mercifully permitted to know it in part, and to perceive very clearly, that it involves no contradiction. It does not imply any impossibility that the divinity should be intimately united with human nature. To say that Christ is both God and man in every respect, would, indeed, be a palpable contradiction, and is a doctrine quite foreign to our creed. We merely maintain, that Christ, in some respects, is God ; in others, a real man. In this, indeed, there is implied something wonderful and extraordinary, but nothing impossible. We should, indeed, advance a contradiction, were we to assert, that the human nature of our Saviour is endowed with any of the incommunicable and specific attributes of the Deity. But the contrary to this, is the Christian belief ; and when we say that Christ's humanity was raised to an extraordinary degree of glory, we always mean such as is consistent with the condition of a creature, and, of course, inferior to that of the Creator. Here, then, there is no shadow of contradiction ; but when we are called upon for clear and perspicuous ideas concerning the mysterious union of the two natures of which we have been speaking, we must acknowledge our inability to explain these hidden things of God. But will it, on this account, be said, that the doctrine is false ? That, because it cannot be explained, it must therefore be rejected ? Were this the case, we might call in question the existence of a thousand appearances in nature, which elude our comprehensions. Alas ! my brethren, an humble sense of our limited faculties becomes such imperfect beings as we are, and we should carefully avoid being wise, beyond what

wisdom prescribes. Let us submit to the authority of God, who speaks to us in his holy Scriptures. If the tenet of the incarnation is calculated to humble the presumption of the human mind, it is surely eminently calculated on the other hand to impress us with a feeling sense of the infinite goodness of God, and of the whole extent and measure of his mercy towards us.

We will proceed to view it in this light; and may the consideration penetrate our hearts with love and gratitude to a Saviour, to whom we owe such unspeakable obligations!

“In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”* My brethren, what interest could the Supreme Being take in the salvation of his sinful creatures? He could have left us to perish, and we deserved to be abandoned. His justice was warranted in punishing guilty criminals. By suffering our race to rush on to perdition, he would merely have left rebellious creatures to themselves; who had abused the faculties he had given them, and thereby rendered themselves unworthy of his grace and support. Instead, however, of treating us with this merited rigour, with infinite compassion he beholds the dismal fate of a perishing world, and adopts the most astonishing measure to restore its wretched inhabitants to his favour—a measure calculated to touch and soften every heart not harder than adamant. He destines his own Son to be our deliverer, and sends him down upon earth for this purpose. He makes him like one of us, and appoints him to be a substitute to suffer for our offences. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”† My brethren, was ever love truly like this, or so likely to kindle in every human bosom the raptures of extatic gratitude and

* 1 John iv. 9.

† John iii. 16.

attachment? "The word was made flesh"—"he who was in the form of God, took the form of a servant." For us he descends to the lowest state of degradation. For us he becomes man, passes his days in wretchedness, and expires on a cross. Could our benevolent Redeemer exhibit a stronger proof of his love? What more could he do to bring back our wandering hearts to his service? "For when we were without strength," says the Apostle,* "in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." If, after this, says he, "any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be *anathema maranatha*."

Let us, then, my brethren, bend all our forces, let us solicit with importunity and sincerity for necessary graces from above, in order to correspond with the great end for which Christ *was made flesh*. He expects and requires our gratitude, as the best earnest of our love and services. "He came to destroy the works of the devil." He came to wean us from every sinful practice, and to elevate us to a state of genuine holiness. "His grace, which bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world."† My brethren, let me intreat you to reflect seriously, and to conclude what must be the fate of those who wilfully neglect this great salvation. Stir up in your minds the solemn and salutary conviction, that by neglecting the positive duties of religion, and by sinful indulgences, men must necessarily contract a degree of guilt, and of liability to punishment, exactly proportionable to the cogency of the motives, with which they have been favoured to lead them to virtue and happiness. "He that despised Moses' law," says St. Paul to the Hebrews,‡ "died without

* Rom. v. 7, &c.

† Titus ii. 12.

‡ x. 28, 29.

mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace." May God avert from us all, such a dreadful condemnation. May he enable us to live always conformably to his gracious designs, which he has manifested for effecting our sanctification in this world, and our salvation in the next, through Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Saviour, to whom, &c. &c.

SERMON II.

THE NATIVITY.

FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN, UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN: AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER, AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE.—*Isaiah ix. 6.*

THE event which we are this day called upon to commemorate, is altogether wonderful. The fulness of time is arrived. Prophecies are accomplished. Promises are fulfilled. The expectations of the Church are realized. The *desire of all nations* is come: and with the shepherds of Bethlehem, we have contemplated “the babe wrapt in swadling clothes, and lying in a manger.” A new star has graced his birth. Wise men have travelled from the East to do him homage. And a multitude of the heavenly host have praised God, and said, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.” Thus, heaven and earth have borne witness to the importance of this event. But the testimony borne to Him in the text, is most glorious and conclusive, and the return of this day renders it peculiarly seasonable and interesting. Let us then indulge ourselves in a few reflections on his *incarnation*, his *empire*, and his *name*, naturally flowing from the words of the text.

And, in the *first place*, his coming in the flesh is expressly noticed in these words, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given”—concerning which words we may begin, by observing, that they seem to speak

of a *present* event, which, at the time they were uttered, could only be prophetic; but it is related here as an historical event. The Church, at that time, could have only expected this blessing; but it is mentioned, nevertheless, as actually enjoyed—a child *is* born, a Son *is* given; because, to purpose and to execute, to promise and to bestow, are the same thing with God. One day with the Lord “is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day.” The divisions of time, which mark out to mortals the present and the future, are nothing to him, whose being excludes all *past* and *to come*, and who says of himself, “*I am* is my name, and this is my memorial in all generations.” But for whom is this blessing designed? Who are authorized to say, Unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a Son is given? The persons to whom he was immediately sent, were “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” He “came first unto his own, and his own received him not.” This, however, was not universally the case. There were some, “who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem.” Simeon, Anna, and others, eagerly embraced him as the *consolation of Israel*. Some, by his preaching and miracles, also believed in him. Moreover, all his first followers, and his twelve Apostles, were Jews. Since that time, an awful *blindness has happened* to this singular people: and even to this day, when Moses is read, the “veil is upon their heart: nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

But he was to be a more general blessing. “It is a light thing,” says God, “that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee a light for the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.” And hence it was, that the angel said to the shepherds, “Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy,

which shall be to *all people*." None, therefore, are excluded from hope on this blessed occasion. He is come to die for the *ungodly*, for *enemies*, for *sinner*s. Surely here is a sufficient warrant for personal application to him—unto you, unto every son and daughter of Adam, "is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Some, indeed, will not eventually derive salvation from him. But He himself has assigned the reason, and beyond this reason let no man presume to go; "ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." If men will spurn the remedy, how can they expect a cure? But what is the special *benefit* acknowledged in the text? "Unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a Son is given." It may be asked, is there any thing very wonderful in this? Is it not a blessing that occurs every day; ■ privilege bestowed upon almost every family? And yet what is more wonderful than the birth of an infant into the world? What more marvellous than the union of soul and body? What more mysterious than human life? What more admirable than the provision made to relieve its wants, to support its weakness, and rear it up from infancy to maturity? The birth of any infant is a far more astonishing occurrence than the creation of the sun. The latter is only a senseless mass of luminous particles. It neither beholds its own light, nor feels its own heat, nor is conscious of its own splendours; and a day will come, when it will cease to exist. But the infant which began only yesterday to breathe, will soon evince a principle within it superior to all the modifications of matter, and will live through all the ages of eternity. Such is every child born into this world. But the Infant of whom we are speaking, is a prodigy of a still higher nature. His birth is altogether miraculous and divine. His coming "shakes the heaven and the earth, the sea and the dry land." To honour the birth of what other child, did a new star ever appear in the firmament, to light wise men from a distant country, to his crib? Or

did angels ever before descend from glory at the birth of a mortal? To the rulers of the earth it is written, "I said ye are Gods." But with all their pompous magnificence, at the birth of their offspring, the stars roll on in their accustomed courses, and the angels pursue their heavenly occupations, while the festivities of the occasion are confined to a small circle of human beings, and are unknown or unnoticed by distant nations.

If we trace the progress of this wonderful child, we shall discover in him treasures of wisdom, at an age when the minds of children are only beginning to open, their ideas are indefinite, trifling, and confused, when the change has hardly taken place that stamps them with the character of intelligent creatures,—we behold, I say, this child, when twelve years old, occupied in the business of his heavenly Father, "sitting in the midst of the Doctors, both hearing and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." After this, "he went down to Nazareth, and was subject unto his own parents." And here a large proportion of his life is concealed from our view. All we know is, that he probably received no learned education; and, as he is called a *carpenter*, that he laboured with his own hands. But, when he appeared in public, he spake as *never man spake* before him. He healed the sick. He raised the dead. He cast out devils. "He went about doing good." He died for our sins. He rose for our justification; and entered into his glory, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." What a mighty gift was this, my brethren! And this brings us to consider,

Secondly, his empire. "The government shall be upon his shoulder." The highest pitch of honour that a child can be born to, is, to fill a throne; and this the world considers as a glorious prerogative. But should he be fortunate enough to live, and reach the envied pre-eminence, for

how short a time will he be able to hold the sceptre, before it drop from his hands either by the usual decay of nature, or be wrested from his grasp by treachery or violence ! Not so the everlasting and uncontrollable dominion of the child Christ Jesus. " His kingdom is from generation to generation." For thus speaks the spirit of prophecy : " In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed ; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." Besides, over what a mole-hill does the greatest monarchy of this world extend, when compared to the universe ! Whereas, the babe now lying in the manger, claims, in his own right, unbounded empire. There is not a being in the universe, but is either his subject or his slave. He has " the keys of hell and of death." All the affairs of the world are subject to his management. Nothing occurs by chance. " It is he who determines concerning a nation, and concerning a people," to establish or to destroy, to enlarge or to diminish. They are all in his hand, like " clay in the hand of the potter." He is " King of kings, and Lord of lords," who are all amenable to his authority, ruled by his permission, and are controlled by his power. He girds them, and guides them, though they know him not. They are invincible, while moving in the direction of his purposes ; and when opposed to these, a straw will check and overthrow them.

But he is peculiarly a King in Zion. He is a Prince as well as a Saviour to his people ; and they who know him, trust in his promises, and submit to his authority ; and this submission is natural and cheerful, because he puts his laws into their minds, and writes them in their hearts. While they obey his commandments, they acquiesce also in his dispensations. To him they refer all their temporal concerns, and leave with him the choice of their inheritance. Thus he possesses a kingdom within a

kingdom ; a kingdom of Grace within the kingdom of his Providence ; and, without the least confusion, one is subservient to the other. “ He is head over all things unto his body the Church.” He has every thing necessary for the defence of his people, and the success of his cause. Therefore, “ this king shall reign and prosper. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. Yea, all the kings shall fall down before him : all nations shall serve him. His name shall endure for ever : his name shall be continued as long as the sun : and men shall be blessed in him ; all nations shall call him blessed.”

Much has been said and written on the subject of government, with a view to ascertain the prerogatives of rulers, and the duties of citizens. While men continue to be depraved beings, absolute power in the hands of an individual, would always be dangerous. Authority must be limited in order to be safe. One branch of government must be a balance to another, and laws must be placed above men. But it is generally acknowledged, that could a sovereign be found perfect in wisdom and goodness, who, in every case, should know what is proper to be done, and be always inclined to do it, his power could not be too absolute, nor his authority too uncontrolled. Such a sovereign is the Lord Jesus, and, therefore, “ he is the blessed and only Potentate, and has all power given unto him in heaven and in earth.” This government, altogether his own, is said to rest *upon his shoulder* ; and however coarse such an image may be deemed by the fastidious delicacy of modern times, yet it was adopted by the nervous poetry of antiquity, which represents a man bearing upon his shoulders the pillars of the universe. But what was this fabled Atlas compared to the Redeemer ? He, indeed, “ upholdeth all things by the word of his power.” The government is represented as resting on the shoulder, to imply attention, difficulty, and burthen, for it cannot be adminis-

tered without labour and care. And this is one, among many reasons, why we are commanded to pray for our *rulers*, and for all that *are in authority*. Who, in fact, can be more proper objects of our supplications? What charge, for instance, devolves upon a parent, when Providence commits into his hands a living mercy, and says, "Take this child, and nurse it for me: I constitute thee its governor, and at thy hands I will require it." How awful a task has the tutor of youth! What a weighty undertaking the pastor of a congregation! But what are these compared to the concerns of a nation? Ask the rulers of this world, whether government be an easy or an enviable concern. How perplexed must be the head that wears a crown. The wisest prince that ever reigned, thus confesses his inability: "I am not able to go in and out before so great a people." "I am not able," says Moses, "to bear all this people;" and, therefore, assistants were provided for him in the law. The weight of government is too burthensome for any single person, and, therefore, it is divided among many—counsellors, ministers, and officers, have their respective shares in the awful charge. But the King of saints stands in need of no help. Infinitely boundless as his empire is, he manages the stupendous whole without fatigue, and without perplexity.

Let us next review the names of this stupendous child. Names, it is well known, are designed to distinguish, to describe, and to honour; and, generally speaking, a single name is sufficient for a single individual. Human excellencies and accomplishments are rare and solitary. One man attends to the motions of the heavenly bodies, and we call him an astronomer. Another makes himself acquainted with the nature of plants, and we call him a botanist. A third applies himself to the art of speaking, and we style him an orator. But what a number, what a variety of sublime titles are employed to show forth the praises of our Lord and Saviour! "His name shall be called Wonderful,

Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace."

He is *wonderful*, because his person exhibits wonders peculiarly astonishing and uncommon. Here we behold combined Deity and humanity; finite and infinite; all-sufficiency and omnipotence; weariness and want. This is "the great mystery of godliness," which will for ever employ the admiration of the redeemed—"God was manifest in the flesh. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Thus you see that he is altogether *wonderful*. His history has no parallel in the annals of time. His manner of life, his mode of teaching, his death, his resurrection, and his dealings with his people in providence and grace, are all unprecedented and marvellous.

His next appellation is that of *Counsellor*. For he is "our advocate with the Father;" he appears in our behalf in the courts of heaven: and while he pleads our cause above, he guides us in all concerns here below. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He is the true source of all spiritual understanding. "I am come," says he, "a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me, should not abide in darkness." Counsel is mine. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Yes, blessed Redeemer, every wrong step which we have taken through life, has arisen from a disregard to thy heavenly instructions. To thee, therefore, may we henceforth refer all the difficulties we feel with regard to doctrine and duty, experience and practice, condition and circumstances. With thee for our counsellor, we can never err; if daily and hourly we feel and express this sentiment, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

His name, moreover, shall be called the *Mighty God*. And, surely, were he not so, this name had not been given

him. Nor would the attributes which are essential to Deity have been represented as the properties of his nature ; we should not have read in the Scriptures of truth, of his boundless wisdom, unlimited power, and eternal duration ; nor would the mighty works so peculiar to Deity have been recorded, as wrought by him, or that worship been claimed which is due only to the Godhead. We do not here consider this doctrine as a subject of controversy. We announce it merely as all-important in itself, and as connected with the hope and experience of every believer. He is represented as “mighty to save;” and that no case is so desperate, that his power cannot reach. This principle enters into all his offices ; gives infinite value to his righteousness, and efficacy to his death. It renders all that he does for us, and in us, altogether divine.

He is the *everlasting Father* ; or, as the original may be rendered more literally, “*The Father of the everlasting age*,”—intimating, plainly, that the Gospel dispensation shall be final with respect to this world, and on this account, as well as many others, materially distinct from the temporary economy of the Jews. This is the meaning of the Apostle, when he says, “And this word yet once more signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken, may remain.” And hence he adds, *we* who have embraced the Gospel, “we receive a kingdom which cannot be moved.” Hence, also, the angel, which St. John saw flying in the midst of heaven, had the *everlasting Gospel to preach unto them* that dwell upon the earth. Of this dispensation, he is the Author and the Founder. It is derived entirely from him ; and, therefore, according to the idiom of the Hebrew language, he is the *Father* of it ; and, for this reason, real Christians are considered as his children. “Behold I,” says he, “and the children which God hath given me.” They derive their new and holy being from his word and Spirit, and they resemble him. “They

are changed into the *same image*, from glory to glory ;” and as he is the Father of the everlasting age, so he is the *everlasting Father*. The relation subsisting between him and his family, can never be dissolved ; and, therefore, his offspring can never be orphans.

He is styled, finally, in the text, the *Prince of peace* ; because he is the Author and the Giver of every kind of peace, which men can enjoy. He is the source and cause of that *peace* which cometh down from above, by reconciling us to our offended Maker ; of *that peace around us*, which arises from the benevolent affections of the heart, from the destruction of pride and envy, and substituting in their place humility and mercy : of *that peace within us*, which reconciles us to ourselves—not indeed to our sinful appetites and indulgences ; but to our remedy and our dependence, to our duty and our situation. When this takes place, the troubled conscience is calmed—the tumultuous passions cease from troubling—and tormenting fears and distracting anxieties subside into peaceful and harmonious composure. We then become immoderately careful for nothing ; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, we make known our requests unto God, and “ the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” In this consolatory language it was, that upon the eve of his departure from them, he addressed his sorrowing disciples : “ These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.” “ *Peace* I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” And let us remember, my brethren, that there is no peace worth having but *His*. The ungodly and worldly man may be insensible of his danger ; he may banish reflection from his mind ; he may live in what he calls a state of enjoyment, and say unto his soul, *take thine ease* ; but there is “ no peace, saith my God, *unto the wicked.*” This invaluable blessing is procured, revealed, and produced, only by the heavenly Prince of peace. “ He healeth the broken

in heart, and bindeth up all their wounds." Wherefore, ye weary and heavy laden, let your burdens be what they may, O, repair to him; he will *give you rest*; and "his rest shall be glorious."

Such is the Saviour, whose arrival in our world, we this day celebrate. And what are we to think of him, my brethren? Are we to be offended at his mean appearance among us; or is this to be an additional motive of our gratitude and love? Are we to be disgusted at the crib of Bethlehem, or to embrace with faith the new born Messiah, and hail his coming in the rapturous language of the prophet: "Lo! this is our God, we have waited for him, he will save us; this is the Lord, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation?" With these heavenly sentiments, the believer no longer feels a void in his heart; he no longer wanders in quest of happiness, saying, "who will show us any good?" He has found him whom *his soul sought after*. He has discovered the *pearl of great price*. The character and claims of his Saviour, have *fixed* and *filled* his mind. The manger, the cross, and the throne; these are the attractions that real Christians feel. Here they feel obligations the most solemn and delightful. Here they find consolations the most refreshing and pure. Here they can live; and here they can die; and here they can adopt the language of inspiration—"Thou art fairer than the children of men;" or of the Church, "Yea, he is altogether lovely;" or of the Apostle, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord."

But what do *we* think of him, my brethren? Let each of us interrogate our hearts on this question, "Has he no form nor comeliness, no beauty, that you should desire him? Do you feel no love to his name? Do you never pray, 'Lord, save me, or I perish?'" What must be thought of the inattention of such Christians? What are

we to think of the blindness of their understandings, and of the depravity of their affections? What! indifferent to the Lord and Giver of life! Where is their regard to their own safety and happiness? Can they find salvation in any other name? Can they do without him, when they come to die? Or how will they appear before him, when seated on the throne of his glory?

But, besides these thoughtless mortals, who feel no interest in him who is called *Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace*, there are some who are more systematically wrong with regard to this subject. They profess to glory in the cross; but they will have nothing to do with the sceptre. The righteousness of Christ is their darling theme; but they mean by it a robe to cover their own remissness and self-love. They are fond of the assurance of faith; but by this they understand a speculative persuasion of their safety, neither derived from, nor connected with, any gracious operations and qualities as evidences of their acceptance. They consider it as a species of unbelief, even to question their being the people of God; but they retain the love of the world in their hearts, and discover the same unsubdued tempers as others. They think it would be wrong to allow sin either to distress or alarm them. *Sin*, say they, cannot hurt a believer. In him, it is beheld with indulgence and forbearance, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." This error, like many others, does not arise from mere ignorance; and, therefore, the Apostle St. Jude, styles them who hold it "ungodly men, who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness." And such should also bear in mind what another Apostle declares, that the *wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. Let us, then, always remember, that the true and distinguishing character of the Lord's people is, that they are saved from their sins, and from their power. And this is

what every awakened soul principally desires; that being “delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we may serve him in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.” Wherefore, the sum of this unspeakable mercy is this—that once in the fulness of time, the great Redeemer hath appeared, “to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;” and to them that look to him, he “will appear a second time without sin unto salvation.”

Behold, then, the Babe of Bethlehem, and view in him the Judge of all mankind. “Behold he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him; but who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth.” Happy they who have loved and followed him, in the *regeneration*. “He will receive them to himself, that, where he is, there they may be also.”

S E R M O N I I I .

THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF CHRIST.

JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER.

Heb. xiii. 8.

NOTHING has done more harm to the cause of Christianity, or furnished stronger materials of objection to the opposer of its faith and doctrines, than representing it as of late original; as a scheme of religion entirely new, and never revealed to mankind till about four thousand years after the Creation. Hence, it has happened, that, amidst the variety of religious systems, each claiming a divine original, the infidel has classed the *Christian* with other impostures of the day; or, allowing the rational and practical influence of religion in general, as derived from God's universal law of nature, has presumed to confine it within the ceremonies, or to make it favour the pretensions of this or that particular church or nation. And hence, also, many who profess, and call themselves Christians,—from neglecting to investigate the evidence of the covenant which was from everlasting, and only ratified at the advent of that Saviour, who, from the very fall of man, stood forth his intercessor,—impeach the unity of God's all-merciful design; darken the prospect of universal redemption; abridge the promised benefits of the Gospel, and shut, on preceding ages, those gates of mercy which they yet consider as open to themselves. By those, however, who diligently search

the Scriptures, and thence deduce their belief, a very different doctrine will be maintained. By extending the atonement of the common Redeemer, to ages that are past, they exalt the dignity, they enlarge the efficacy of the great Propitiation for our sins. By contending for a retrospect to the doctrines and sanctions of Christianity, they consequently maintain that the Light of Life has dispelled that ignorance which must otherwise have enveloped the world for more than two-thirds of the time of its existence,—they unite the promise with the performance, the prophecy with the completion, the anticipation with the event. They behold the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets, contemplating the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow,—they do not barely affirm that God bore testimony to his proposed redemption, but that through his Holy Spirit that testimony was received; that he gave faith, (without which it is impossible to please God,) to justify, and hope to console his chosen servants, till the appointed manifestation of the Great Author and Finisher of that faith, should be made to the subjects of that universal redemption. In this do all the Prophets agree, and the sum and substance of the Apostle's reasoning upon the text before us is, that the faith which he exhorts the Hebrew believers to keep whole and undefiled, has been one and the same in all ages of the Church; that it was no variable thing, either in itself or in its effects, but immutable as the Divine Mediator, whose religion it is. "Remember them," says St. Paul, "which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow,—considering the end of their conversation,—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." That is, the one redeeming Saviour, of whom the promise, the performance, and the perpetual administration of the Holy Spirit, conspire to testify in due proportion to the past, the present, and the ages that are to come. For on the Patriarch, the true Israelite, and the faithful Christian, one light has invariably shone, though

with different lustre ; and the God of mercy and love bade sinful man look forward to his covenanted restoration, from the promise in the garden of Eden, to the confirmation of every assurance, "when the hour of his judgment is come."

My endeavour will be to establish this important truth ; and the course of our inquiry will necessarily carry us through a wide field of discussion, too wide, indeed, for a single discourse. I trust, however, in the extensive survey, to be able to discover the path of life ; and should we, from our Christian eminence, look down upon the subsisting traces of the Patriarchal and Jewish churches, all pursuing the same road, all leading to the same end ;—should we, in the wildest digressions of heathen mythology, by adopting the discoveries of a Bryant, ■ Sir Wm. Jones, and a Maurice, be able to measure back the wandering footsteps of idolatry to the very departure from the true faith, and to pick out from the tenets and precepts of pagan philosophy, authentic vouchers of the existing hope and promise, of "a Redeemer mighty to save," we shall then not only behold the glorious, but the uniform design of the Gospel institution. We shall show forth a Saviour's love, upholding fallen man, and recovering his faded dignity. We shall exhibit Christianity, as it is,—the triumph of grace over sin and death,—the fruit of the seed that was to bruise the serpent's head. We shall welcome, with more abundant gratitude the glad tidings of joy, which ushered in a Saviour's birth,—who came to ratify man's primeval assurance of pardon,—to complete his promised restoration to his forfeited inheritance,—to confirm his justification unto holiness, and his resurrection unto life eternal.

My brethren, the farther inquiries of this nature are extended, the more firmly will our Christian faith be established ; and each step, as we advance, affording some characteristic evidence of the Apostle's assertion, we shall be conducted along the ways of God's righteous providence,—every where collecting arms for the Christian warrior to

repel the attacks of the infidel, and exposing the temporizing soldier who pretends to fight under the banners of the cross.

The first revelation made to Adam after his fall, was a promise of redemption, and this appears to have been connected with a typical ordinance, to preserve a prospect of acceptance, resulting from the shedding of blood. For though we do not read the injunction itself, yet we learn the respect that the Almighty showed to the sacrifice of Abel, which exactly coincided with that which he afterwards required in the institution of the Mosaic ritual. That this revelation continued in force through all the antediluvian ages of the world, we may infer from the righteousness of Noah, who walked with God, and who was therefore saved, when a defection from the faith had filled the earth with violence, and, in consequence of their guilt, an insulted Creator destroyed the whole race of man "from off the face of it." The acceptance of Abel's sacrifice not having been signified by any temporal blessing, but, on the contrary, followed by an immediate and violent death, must necessarily lead to an inference that it promised a blessing to arise from the archetype of the victim, in a life of which the body and blood of Jesus Christ was to be the purchase. It was by faith he offered it. It was by faith that Enoch was translated, and that Noah became heir of the righteousness that is by faith. That the sacrifice, therefore, which he offered on his coming forth from the ark, had in contemplation the object of that faith, is an indisputable consequence. From Noah, then, a testimony to the hope which was communicated to him by God, and a sacramental mode of anticipating its object, were exhibited to the few who survived the flood. The transmittal from the original communication to the reviving world is thus made perfect, but however the ceremonial form might have been retained, the spirit of it soon departed, and we find the faith of their fathers abandoned, in a very short time, by

the descendants of Noah. Exalting himself against God, who was still testified by his revelation, man again incurs his hot displeasure. Confusion of tongues, and consequently the dissolution and dispersion of all subsisting society, was the sentence pronounced against him at Babel, when the Almighty "scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." As all came under this penalty, there was no preacher of righteousness to restore the faith, and accordingly we behold the prevalence of idolatry in all the recorded nations of the earth. In consequence, however, of adhering to the statutes and laws of his God, and of preserving the purity of primeval theology, and the spiritual meaning of sacrifice, amidst the corrupted rites and offerings that ignorance had now grafted on superstitious dread,—we observe Abraham, called out of his own country, and from among his own kindred,—made the object of God's favour and adoption, and separated for the work of righteousness from the rest of mankind, who were given up to the vanity of their own imaginations.

Again, when the direct interposition of God was evinced by miracles to Egypt, and the people of God were preserved with Moses, the Egyptians were punished in the most exemplary manner. Their unbelief drew down a penalty connected with their offence.

The generation which followed Moses, though they ate of the Passover, yet fell away from the faith, that was thus again revealed to them. They were, therefore, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, doomed to perish in the wilderness, for their apostacy and rebellion.

While the Temple yet stood, a type of an expected redemption, the Jews departed from the creed of their fathers. They were also given up to their enemies, and carried into a penal captivity.

Our Lord himself "came to his own, but his own received him not." The issue is sufficiently known. There is, therefore, in all the degrees of evidence afforded to

mankind, no intimation given, to which we may not attach a faith that will justify, or a denial that will condemn. And if, with the full concentrated light of his holy Gospel now shining forth, we yet depart from the ways which it renders thus clear before us, why should we expect an exemption from the indignation of God, or that he will not withdraw the proffered guidance of his hand? Upon this foundation, are all our proofs to stand; and, though to the candid inquirer, we might fairly put the question, what becomes of the Patriarchal, if it be separated from the Mosaic, or of the Mosaic, if separated from the Christian dispensation; yet we are desirous rather of bringing confirmation to the truth of our position, from the progressive periods of their history, from the memorials of Heathen nations, the dispersion of the Jews, and the apostacy of the present times. I wish, in one word, to convince you, as a subject of the highest importance and consolation to Christians, that the whole volume of inspiration points to Christ as to the guide and Saviour of man; and that, of course, whoever, without Christ, attempts to explain his own nature and destination, either wanders into conjecture, or reposes in infidelity. And this duty becomes more urgently necessary, as it seems to have been reserved to this enlightened age, in which many of us have lived, to oppose with more decided malignity the revelation of Jesus Christ; with an awful warning to the wisdom of this world, we have seen men plunge from doubts which questioned the validity of God's word, to the madness of impiety, which denies his existence. But the judgments which have followed, and the crimes and horrors which have desolated the earth, bear the most indisputable marks of the hand that directs the moral, like the natural hurricane, to its destined purpose: of the hand of *Him* who is pledged to maintain the cause of righteousness; who has ever avenged his violated laws; and who, to punish and correct mankind, has made an apostate world the engine of its own destruction.

To the maturing scheme of prophecy, pre-ordained and foretold by the *faithful Witness*, the Christian looks with confidence, but rests in hope, waiting, like the Patriarch, for the fulness of consummation, and the promised rest. He may mistake the increasing light for the brightness of the perfect day ; yet in its progress onwards, as it must shine with clearer lustre, he will follow it as a guide, amidst the darkness of events, and as the day-star that is to lead him to the God of his salvation. Whatever seal may be now opened,—whatever vial of wrath has lately been pouring forth, he will not rashly decide ; but directed by the word of Him, “ who was, and is, and is to come,” he will discover, in the late signs of the times, something like the approach of that dreadful period when the measure of iniquity is to be full, and when the Son of Man, at his second advent, shall “ hardly find faith upon the earth.” He may, perhaps, so far presume to remove the veil that hangs between him and futurity, as to disclose, under the symbol of the “ beast that was to ascend out of the bottomless pit,” the spirit of Anti-Christ, under its last terrific form,—that was not only to *speak as a Dragon*,—to *change times and laws*,—to have its mouth full of cursing and bitterness, and its feet *swift to shed blood*,—but was to trample underfoot the *two witnesses of Jesus*, to insult *their memories*, and to rejoice in their destruction. Whether or not, this part of the prophetic vision be now realized, and a tyrannical and ferocious government be allowed to identify the features of the hideous monster,—whether or not a rejection of the Old and New Testament, (the witnesses of Jesus,) and the senseless admiration of deluded nations, be admitted as an interpretation of the symbolic language, and explain the apostolic picture of all men wandering after the beast, and worshipping his power, certain it is, that new scenes are unfolding themselves in the great system of Providence, and that they are acting upon the theatre of man’s redemption. Certain it is, that He who is “ the way, and the truth, and the life, the same

yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," is hastening to its accomplishment that promised period, when "the seed of the woman shall finally bruise the serpent's head, and all the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdom of our Christ."

From corruptions which polluted, and from superstition which disgraced the altars of religion,—from the worship of images, and from the invocation of saints and angels,—it was natural for the reflecting mind to revolt ; and the pointed ridicule that exposed, as well as the serious argument that refuted them, found admirers and patrons among all who felt for the dignity of God's sanctuary, and for the simplicity of his holy worship. But a confutation of error, which alone engaged the hearts of the wise and good, soon became a mischievous weapon against the truth, in the hands of the infidel and the profligate. The removal of prejudices, masked their hostility to all belief. The defects of one part of Christ's Church, disguised their plan for completing its total destruction. And, under the pretence of purifying the stream of Christianity, they were, in reality, employed in efforts to cut off its source, and dry up the fountain head.

Wise in their generation, they knew that the instrument must be fitted to its work ; that man's social duties were interwoven in his very nature ; and that, to overturn and to destroy, would not be effected by a momentary delirium, or through a series of unconnected facts. They knew that human reason must first shake off all dependence upon religion, and human weakness be deprived of its support and consolation,—and then, as it has too fatally proved, the rampart opposed to his passions being broken down, that man would be prepared to enter at the breach with a ferocity suited to his frightful transformation. What might have formerly been matters of opinion, is in these our days confirmed by facts. A systematic conspiracy against the religion of Christ, subtle in its operations and deter-

mined in its object, has been unfolded with all its horrid testimony. And when we behold a civilized and courteous nation changed of a sudden into a mass of inhuman plunderers,—when we behold a people once polished in their habits, and gentle in their manners, breaking down every fence of decency, and sweeping away, with infuriate barbarity, the affections and the charities of social life; it is only from such testimony that we can account for this wild waste of happiness. It is only from such testimony, and from the punishment that has followed those who boast a freedom from superstitious bondage, that we ought to learn the value of Christian dependence. And though, without any presumptuous decision, it may be affirmed, that “tribulation is come upon the earth;” that “men’s hearts are failing them for fear;” and that “many false Prophets have arisen, and deceived many.” Yet we are assured, that, amidst the darkness of the perilous storm, there is a light sown for the righteous; and that *He*, who is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” will cause the very wrath of men to praise him,—will, in due time, make manifest the ways of Providence, and show the wicked ensnared in the traps they had laid for others.

From the progress of crime, and from the picture of misery, let us now turn with gratitude to scenes of milder aspect,—to our own land, still a country of Christian hope, and hitherto wonderfully protected by ■ Saviour’s love.* But, my brethren, even in this favoured soil, the seed of infidelity has been abundantly sown, and its poisonous plants are spreading in many directions. To the daring spirit of avowed atheism, our minds are not yet tempered; but the alarming circulation and popularity of writings, which have nothing to recommend them but the rant of blasphemy,—the disturbance of established

[* The views here expressed, though peculiarly adapted to the time at which they were uttered, can never be read without interest.]

order, and the defiance of all authority, human and divine, are among the symptoms that portend a defection from Christ, rather than a long-suffering for his faith. Issuing from the same licentious school, how many teachers, with an insolent tenderness for the public welfare, have stepped forth to instruct us? Our libraries are crowded with pretended discoveries in nature to falsify the work of God, and the history of his creation. We have systems of morality, patched together from broken fragments of revelation, to disprove the exercise of God's will, or the necessity of his law; and we have essays on man's origin and progress, which take him out of the hands of his Creator, and leave him to mould the form and to complete the sum of his own happiness. Instead of asking of the days that are past, to teach us wisdom, we seek for it in speculative discussions, or in partial experiments; and *humility*, the key that would open the treasures of eternal life, is buried under the rubbish of philosophic pride and delusive theory. Thus the brightest talents have been led into error,—have opposed probabilities to the sure word of God, and denied demonstration, in order to avoid belief.

Baneful, however, as these fruits have proved, they are happily placed beyond the reach of many; but the branches that bear them are of wider extent, and of more abundant produce, than we wish to suspect; and the crafty enemy of the human race is every where, and in every shape, aiding and tempting the unwise to pluck and eat. I advert to those loose and licentious publications, (happily unknown to the generality of my hearers,) which, making the feelings a pander to the passions, dissolve the force of every moral precept, and extract the sting of guilt from every known sin; or which, quieting the fears of man by appealing to the mercy and goodness of God, dispose, at will, of his justice and indignation. I advert to that wildness of imagination which despises sober restraint; that fictitious morality which degrades religion; those abandoned princi-

ples which pollute common life. And when we reflect, moreover, (to resume the metaphor,) that these are branches of the same fatal tree, which has been planted on the ruins of kingdoms, and watered with the blood of their inhabitants, is it "a tree to be desired to make one wise?" Is it a time to see it naturalized in our American soil? Is it a time to be silent, when so many thoughtless beings are aiding its growth, and grafting its pernicious scions on the fairest shoots in the Christian vineyard?

In this state of things, (for it ill becomes us to look back on the calamities which the iniquity of man has produced, without any self-application; or, as professing Christians, to arraign the impiety and enormity of others, without any national charge, or accusation against ourselves,) in the *present state* of things, I say, not drawn, I trust, in the spirit of censure; not trespassing even beyond the bounds of common observation—what have we to oppose to the delusions of this world, but the testimony of God; the evidences afforded to the unalterable design and purposes of its great Creator? What stop can we hope to put to the frantic experiments and wild machinations of human policy, but the voice of *Him*, who, to the passions, as well as to the elements, can say, "Peace, be still;" who, from the beginning, has made bare his arm in the eyes of all nations; and "travelling in the greatness of his strength," has trodden down the people in his anger; who, arrayed in the splendour of that glory, which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world, wielding the arms, and invested with all the titles of omnipotence, is represented as weighing the earth in his balance, as upholding the cause of righteousness, and vindicating by his judgments, and protecting by his mercy, the "honour due unto his name?" The sound is gone forth into all nations, "thy salvation is near;" and, like the shepherds of old, we upon whom the glory of the Lord has shone, are travelling onwards in faith to see this thing which has come to pass:

to learn the mystery which the Lord has made known to us, of God in Christ reconciling the world to himself; of Christ in the Father, and the Father in him. It is the Lord, who, in the garden, gave comfort to the guilty progenitors in whom we fell. It is the angel of the *old* covenant, whom we are now going to meet, as the messenger of the *new*. It is the Jehovah of Israel, whom we are approaching to worship as the incarnate Son of God. It is the Lord of hosts, whom we are to welcome as the Prince of peace, and who, at the head of his faithful Israel, redeemed out of all kindreds, tongues, and nations, is again to appear as their everlasting Deliverer, the King of glory. It is, in short, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" who came to visit us in great humility; not the son of Joseph and Mary; but He whom all the angels of God were to worship. Not a prophet sent from God; but the everlasting Counsellor. Not a pre-existent spirit descended from heaven to proclaim the truths of the Gospel; but the eternal Mediator for ever promised to, and for ever looked for, by the faithful, in whom they waited for that glorious consummation foretold in him; "Behold thy salvation cometh!"—in whom they expected that great and atoning Saviour, whose consoling voice had uttered, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." The evidences of this important truth, should be made the frequent subjects of our meditation, in order to concentrate every name by which our Redeemer has been called, every appellation by which he has been known to his people; every relation in which he stands to them, in that comprehensive and endearing one, "the Lord our Righteousness." That these evidences may be found, and that they will be produced against the scoffers at his word, and the debasers of his character, we have many an apostolic affirmation, many a declaration of inspired history. What is the language of St. Peter? "Repent ye, therefore," says he, "and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the

times of refreshment shall come, from the presence of the Lord ;” and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, “ Whom the heaven must receive, until the time of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of his prophets, since the world began.” In the same strain, and with the same decision as to the nature and object of faith, the Apostle also, in this epistle to the Hebrews, sets forth the efficacy of it as a principle of religious action, and illustrates it in many cases of pure, unshaken, suffering, and triumphant faith, from Abel, the son of Adam, to the time of the Maccabees. And, after a continued series of facts, deduced in regular order, both before the law, and under the law, concludes with this direct assurance : “ All having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they, without us, might not be made perfect ;” that is, they relied on the promise ; but this promise was given only in, and through, the seed that was to come, which, says the Apostle, was Christ.

But, my brethren, while endeavouring *now*, or at *any* time, to raise your conceptions to the Author and Finisher of your faith, I should very imperfectly discharge the duties of a Christian minister, were I not to endeavour to impress on your hearts its necessary and correspondent consequences. If our blessed Lord was announced to our first parents ; if, from time to time, through the long series of the Mosaic and the Prophetic days, the opening beams of this Sun of Righteousness broke through the cloud under which they were obscured, lighting up the countenances, and gladdening the hearts of those who were called the servants of God ; what ought a Christian to feel at the full manifestation of the Redeemer’s glory ? Becoming a witness to all these miracles of mercy, well might the Apostle exclaim, “ How shall we escape, if we neglect such great salvation ?” Christ has indeed shone forth a light to them who sat in darkness ; has been announced as a Saviour to sinners ; but only for peni-

tent and believing sinners. The terms of his covenant are, "repent, and be forgiven." It was the language of the evangelical Prophet; it was the preparatory injunction of John the Baptist; it was our Lord's own original lesson: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It was, (as we have before observed) the holy Apostle St. Peter's opening of his ministry, "Repent ye, and be converted." This was to be the issue of early predictions, of Patriarchal promises, of Mosaic rites, of Prophetic warnings, of Christian miracles. The design and end of all this splendid apparatus was, that repentance and remission of sins, should be preached to all nations. Let it not also be forgotten by a Christian people, that blest as they are with peculiar privileges, they are also loaded with more than common responsibility. Why were Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, threatened with a doom more dreadful than that even of Sodom and Gomorrah; but, because, though so many mighty works had been done among them, they repented not; because they were blind to *Him* whom we profess to see; because they disregarded *Him* whom we profess to adore.

Let us all, then, lay these things seriously to heart. Let us all ask ourselves that most important question, each for himself, Have I repented? Do I bring forth fruits meet for repentance, the only sure evidence of my pardon being sealed? If not, while Christ, who descended from his glory, as the Mediator of a new covenant, still sits upon a throne of mercy, let us fall down before him, confessing our sins, and imploring forgiveness and acceptance for his sake. Let us pray for the Spirit of God to soften our hearts, to render our contrition more deep, our vows of obedience more sincere, our resolutions of amendment more efficacious. Thus invigorated, and thus consoled, the believer may go forth, and tell with joy the glad tidings of his salvation. He may speak with confidence of all the gracious promises of his inheritance with Christ, and of

“the kingdom prepared for him before the foundation of the world.” In past transactions and fulfilments, in visibles and invisibles, in prospect and in prophecy, looking to one Saviour, and to the final consummation of everlasting love, his song will be that of Moses and the Lamb, and the burden of it—“Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among all the mighty ones? Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou, in thy mercy, hast led forth from the world the people whom thou hast redeemed, thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation.”

He may cry out with Christian exultation, “This is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Amen, Amen, &c.

S E R M O N I V.*

J U S T I F I C A T I O N B Y F A I T H.

FOR YE ARE ALL THE CHILDREN OF GOD BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS.
Gal. iii. 26.

AMONG the articles of the Christian religion, Faith in Christ, and *Justification* by Faith, are truths of primary importance, affecting the whole system of revelation, and claiming, of course, the solemn attention of all who believe in it. True, indeed, it is, that these subjects have, in latter ages, given occasion to some controversy and confusion of ideas. But this circumstance can with no more propriety dispense with the obligation upon the professors of religion of maintaining what they conceive to be the truth in this point, than in any other article of religion whatever; though, indeed, when prejudices are discarded, and the passages relating to these doctrines are critically examined, no very material difference will be found among the reformed churches on this head. In all the Apostolic epistles, these primary doctrines are frequently insisted upon as essentially connected with the Christian system; but in none are they delivered with more earnestness and perspicuity than in the Epistle to the Galatians, of which the principal drift seems to be an elucidation of the doctrine of *justification by faith*. Wherefore, we will endeavour to

[* This Sermon is noted by the author as an abridgment of Dr. Whitby's preface to the Epistle to the Galatians.]

show, *first*, what is the scriptural meaning of the word *faith*, especially as it relates to *justification*; or, in other words, what is true *Christian faith*, as taught in the Scriptures. *Secondly*, what the Apostle means by *justification*. *Thirdly*, that this justification is ascribed by him to *faith alone*, in opposition to works of righteousness performed either by Jew or Gentile. And, *fourthly*, that it imposes upon us, nevertheless, the highest obligations to perform them, under the penalty of forfeiting all its blessings; and that it offers, always, sufficient motives to Christian obedience,—which, if sincere and lasting, it will certainly produce.

I. And, *first*, as to the scriptural meaning of the word *faith*. I think it appears evident, throughout the whole New Testament, that Gospel *faith* is nothing more than a *cordial and firm belief*, that Jesus is the *Christ*, the *Lord*, the true *Messiah*, or *Prophet*, sent from God to reveal his will to the world, the *Son of God*, and *Saviour* of mankind.

To prove this, we need only consider, that divine faith, in general, is nothing more than a firm assent unto, or full persuasion of mind, concerning any truth revealed immediately by Almighty God himself, or by those whom he has commissioned to reveal it, and bear testimony to it. For since *human faith* consists in a full persuasion of the truth of what is told us by fellow mortals, *divine faith* can be nothing more than a similar persuasion, resting altogether upon the authority of God. This description of faith is clearly taught by the Apostle;* for, having declared,† that the faith by which we overcome the *world*, is the belief that “Jesus is the Son of God,” he proceeds to show the proofs of this proposition, viz. “that Jesus is the Son of God.” First, because the Holy Spirit beareth witness to it, and he is the Spirit of truth.‡ Secondly, because there

* 1 John, v. 5.

† Ibid. v. 4, 5.

‡ Ibid. v. 6.

are three that bear record in heaven to it, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”* Now, says he, “if we receive the witness of men;” if we rely upon their testimony in courts of judicature; if, by the mouth of two or three human witnesses our weightiest concerns are determined, shall not the witness of God be greater? That is, shall it not establish our faith in this particular, that “Jesus is the Son of God?” To disbelieve this truth, says the Apostle, is to give the lie to God; “because we believe not the record which God has given of his Son.”† If we do not receive this testimony on his authority, “we set to our seal that God is not true.”‡

This being, then, the nature of divine faith in general, *faith in our Lord Jesus Christ* must be a full assent to, or a firm persuasion of the truth of every particular which God himself has revealed, or persons, commissioned by him, have testified and recorded concerning our *Lord Jesus Christ*; or, in other words, “it is an unshaken belief, that he who suffered at Jerusalem was the true *Messiah*,—the *Saviour of the world*,—the *Prophet* who was for to come,—the Person who was constituted *Lord* of all things, or, which amounts to the same thing, that he was *Christ*, the *Son of God*.”

This great fundamental truth, respecting the person of Christ, is taught and attested by all the witnesses to the Messiah. The Scripture assures us that John the Baptist, who came for “a witness to testify of the light,”§ “saw and bare record, that this is the Son of God.”|| God the Father testified, by divers methods, that he was the Son of God. Thus we read,¶ “There is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that the witness, which he witnesseth of me, is true, the Father himself, who hath sent me, beareth witness of me.” And this he did by a voice from

* 1 John, v. 7. † Ibid. v. 10. ‡ John iii. 33. § Ibid. i. 7. || Ibid. i. 34.
¶ Ibid. v. 32.

heaven, saying, “Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;”^{*} and by giving the power of working miracles in confirmation of his doctrines, and his own testimony; and therefore Christ speaks thus to the people:† “I have a greater testimony than that of John, the works which my Father hath given me to do, they bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.”

The Holy Ghost, also, bears witness that “Jesus is the Son of God;”‡ and this he did not only when he descended upon our Saviour at his baptism, and by raising him from the dead, he being “quickened by the Spirit,”§ but by enabling him to cast out devils, and to perform such works as never any other person did, or could do: whence our Lord concludes, “If by the Spirit of God I cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come to you;” or, then is it clear, that I am the Messiah sent from God to preach the doctrine of his kingdom to you.|| And, again, says he, “When the Comforter is come, even the Spirit of truth, he shall testify of me.”¶ And this he actually did, for “we are witnesses of all these things,” says St. Peter,** “and so is also the Holy Ghost.” In a word, “unto him give all the Prophets witness,”†† and of all the Scriptures, says Christ, “they are they which testify of me.”‡‡

If we consider, in the next place, the end for which all these witnesses are produced, we shall find the whole body of their testimony relating to the Messiah, and learn clearly from it, what is meant by *faith in Christ*. Sometimes, it is said, that they bare record, that he is the *Son of God*.§§ Sometimes they testify that he was “the Christ,”—the Lord Christ,—the *Saviour of the world*,—“the Lamb of God, that taketh away its sins—exalted to be a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins to them that believed in his name.” They testify that he is “Lord of all things;”

* Mark, i. 11.

† John, v. 30.

‡ 1 John, v. 6.

§ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

|| Matt. xii. 28.

¶ John, xv. 26.

** Acts, v. 32.

†† Ibid. x. 43.

‡‡ John, v. 39.

§§ John, i. 34. 1 John, v. 5—10.

and "that it was he who was ordained to be the Judge of the quick and the dead." They testify "that this Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are witnessess." And, again, "we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ."*

In short, the whole of their testimony, though under different expressions, goes clearly to prove, that *Jesus Christ our Lord, is the Son of God, and Saviour of the world*; and this being the great and important truth which they were so anxious to attest, and to inculcate upon mankind, we may rest assured, that, in the Scripture sense of the word, the belief of *this truth*, is properly *faith in Christ*; a hearty *belief* that Christ is the Messiah sent into the world to teach us the will of God,—the Saviour of the world, sent to redeem us by his death from death and misery, and to bestow salvation upon all his faithful servants,—that he is our *Lord* and *King* by whose laws we must be governed at the great accounting day. That this was the *faith in Christ*, professed by the New Testament saints, we have many instances upon record. We find Nathaniel declaring, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel."† This was the faith of the Samaritan woman, and of her fellow citizens,‡ for to this woman, our Saviour declares himself to be the true Messiah. I, says he, that *speak unto thee, am He*; and upon her testimony, and their own observations, many Samaritans *believed*, and declared it to be their firm conviction, "that this was verily the Christ, the Saviour of the world." This was the faith of Martha; for Jesus having said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth on me though he were dead, yet shall he live; believest thou this"—she answers, "Yea, Lord, I believe thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."§ So that, if Martha had faith in Christ, here was its object. Again, we find St. Paul alleging, "that Christ must needs have suf-

* 1 Cor. xv. 15.

† John, i. 49.

‡ Ibid. iv. 26.

§ Ibid. ii. 25, 26.

ferred, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom we preached, *was the Christ* ;”* and it immediately is added, and “some of them believed ;” that is, they were persuaded of the truth of what St. Paul had testified. So, when they of Berea, after searching the Scriptures, were persuaded of the truth of what St. Paul had taught, they believed that Jesus was the Christ,—that he had suffered, and risen from the dead,—and thus they produced an act of *faith in Christ*. And when Crispus, a chief ruler of the synagogue, and many of the Corinthians, believed, on the testimony of Paul, that Jesus was the Christ, on this occasion the Apostle declares, “the word of faith which we preach is this, that if thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and in thine heart believest that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”† To confess, therefore, and acknowledge that *Jesus is the Lord*, and that God raised him from the dead, is to believe on him. Lastly, “this,” says St. John, “is the victory over the world, even our faith.”‡ And then he adds, “who is he that overcometh the world,” but he that believeth that “Jesus is the Son of God.” Wherefore, to believe this, is true *Christian* and *Scriptural* faith.

This, moreover, was the faith required by the Apostles in those who were to be baptized. And, whenever it appeared to be sincere and genuine in any persons, they were admitted into the number of believers. Thus, when St. Peter says to the Jews,§ “Let all the house of Israel know, that God hath made this Jesus, whom ye crucified, Lord and Christ.” This saying immediately touches their hearts, and “makes them to inquire, what shall we do ?” The Apostle answers, “repent you, and believe every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” And then it follows, that “they who gladly received this word were baptized ; and there were added to the Church three thousand souls.” Again, “Philip went

* Acts, xvii. 3.

† Rom. x.

‡ 1 John, v. 4.

§ Acts, 2.

down to the city of Samaria, and preached to them Christ.”* And “when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God ;” that is, when they heartily assented to them,—“they were baptized, both men and women.” And, when he was asked by the noble Ethiopian, “What hindereth me to be baptized?” Philip returns this answer, “if thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest.” And when he answered, “I believe that Jesus is the Son of God,” then was he instantly baptized. So that the faith required for baptism, was nothing more than a hearty acknowledgment, that “Jesus Christ *was the Son of God.*”

This, therefore, being the *only notion* of true and justifying faith, held out in the Scriptures, to the exclusion of many other modern phrases and definitions of faith, which, because they are unscriptural, we may safely pronounce to be unfounded, we will now proceed to inquire, what is meant by *justification*, in St. Paul’s acceptance of the word. The justification here spoken of by St. Paul, is “an act of God exercised and accomplished upon man ;” and this the Apostle teaches expressly in these words, “who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect, it is God that justifies.”† And again, “It is one God, who justifies the *circumcision* by faith, and the *uncircumcision* by faith ;” that is, both Jew and Gentile.‡ “It is God who justifies the ungodly.”§ “He is just, and the justifier of him, that believeth in Jesus.”|| Now, it is evident from the whole tenor of Scripture, that God justifies the sinner by absolving him from the guilt of his past sins, by a free act of grace, in pardoning his iniquities, or not imputing to him his sins ; so that his justification must import his absolution from the guilt of sin, and, as a necessary and immediate consequence, his “reconciliation to God, and acceptance into his favour.” That this is the meaning of the word justification, as used

* Acts, viii.

† Rom. viii. 33.

‡ Ibid. iii. 30.

§ Ibid. iv. 5.

|| Ibid. iii. 26.

by the Apostle in this place, is evident from many other passages of the Apostolic writings. Thus, in order to induce men to believe in Christ, St. John* declares him to be "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world;" and that "he that believeth in him should not come into condemnation." That *His* "was the blood of the new covenant which was shed for the remission of sins;" even of that covenant in which God promises "to be merciful to our unrighteousness, and to remember our iniquities no more."† In a word, "all have sinned," says the Apostle,‡ "and fallen short of the glory of God." Therefore, absolution from this sin must enable us to obtain this glory; and, accordingly, he adds, "we who have thus sinned, are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Now, *this* redemption, the same Apostle twice assures us, is nothing more or less, than "the remission of our sins;" or, in other words, an act of God effecting our justification, and with it our reconciliation to God. "For," says St. Paul, "much more being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath by him; for if, when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."§ So that justification and reconciliation mean plainly the same thing; and, accordingly, we are told, in another place, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."|| Wherefore, by ceasing to impute sin unto us God accounts us righteous, and for that reason becomes reconciled to us, because while man continues unrighteous, such reconciliation can never take place.

Justification, moreover, stands directly opposed to condemnation. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect," or to believers? Who shall charge them with

* John, i. 29.

† Heb. viii.

‡ Rom. iii.

§ Ibid, v.

|| 2 Cor. v.

a crime? "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth them."* Now, of what can mankind be accused, but of sin? For, what can they be condemned, but for the transgression of God's law? Justification, therefore, must be the act, or sentence of God, discharging them from the guilt, or the condemning power of sin.

Now this justification is ascribed, by St. Paul, to *faith alone*, in opposition to works of righteousness, performed either by Jew or Gentile. And this plainly follows, from what has been shown to be the Apostle's meaning of the word justification in this place. For how, in fact, could either Jew or Gentile be justified by the works of *that* law, whether Mosaic, or *natural*, which rendered them both obnoxious to condemnation for sin, and guilty before God? Could they receive remission of sins, by complying with that law, which left them under condemnation for it? Can any man imagine, after the charge, which he brings against the Gentiles, chapter first, and against the Jews, chapters second and third, of his Epistle to the Romans, that the Apostle could intimate that they should be justified, or absolved from the guilt of those offences by their works, and not by faith only? A common mistake on this subject seems to be, that many do not merely refer justification back to the absolution of sins committed before any act of faith was produced, but extend it also forward to our whole Christian conversation; to all the sins committed against the conditions and tenor of the new covenant of grace. They forget that the Apostle styles justification "the remission of our past sins;"† "the redeeming of us from the sins committed against our former covenant;"‡ the "purging of the believer from his old sins."§ So that this justification, which is bestowed on us, when we first believe on the Lord Jesus, and bestowed for this faith alone, leaves us afterwards to be absolved, or condemned, according as we obey, perform, or

* Rom. viii.

† Ibid. iii. 25.

‡ Heb. ix. 15.

§ 2 Pet. i. 9.

violate the condition of the new covenant, and consequently to be judged hereafter, not according to our faith, but our works.

It appears, therefore, evident, from express and repeated declarations in the Apostolic writings, that sinful man is, in the first instance, *justified by faith alone*; by that faith, which receives the Lord Jesus under all his scriptural offices and titles. The works of the Mosaic law have no part in this justifying process, as all divines agree; neither is it the effect, or consequence of evangelical obedience, or works of righteousness performed by us after we become believers in Christ. That these works cannot be included in justifying faith, is evident—because they necessarily follow this faith, and suppose its pre-existence. “We are saved,” says the Apostle,* that is, we are saved from our past sins, or, we are placed in a state of salvation, “by grace through faith, not of works; for we are created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God hath ordained that we should walk in.”† So that we must be first in Christ by virtue of this faith, before we can be qualified for works of evangelical righteousness. And this argument may be confirmed from many instances of persons who believed, and were immediately baptized on the same day; for being baptized for “the remission of sins,” they, of course, were justified. Thus, at Peter’s sermon, three thousand believed, and were baptized the same day.‡ Thus, the Samaritans, upon hearing Philip preach “concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of the Lord Jesus,” were immediately baptized.§ This, also, was the case with the Æthiopian; with Cornelius and the others who heard Peter’s sermon; with the jailor and all his house “*straightway*.” Now, what evangelical obedience could these persons perform in order to their being justified by works? In a word, that justifying faith does not formally include works of evange-

* Rom. v. 9.

† Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10.

‡ Acts ii.

§ Acts viii.

lical righteousness, appears clearly from the distinction which the Scripture makes between them, when it informs us, that “faith works by love, acts with our works, and is made perfect by them;” when it calls upon us “to show forth our faith by our works,” and “to add to our faith, virtue, knowledge, godliness, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, and charity;” when it speaks expressly of the “word of faith,” and the “obedience of faith.”* The very nature of faith requires this distinction. For what is faith, but an assent unto testimony; divine faith, an assent to a divine testimony; and, consequently, *faith in Christ*, an assent to the testimony given by God of him. Now, it is not reasonable to suppose, that Christ and his Apostles, when using this word, should be thought to imply any thing beyond its obvious and literal meaning—which they would certainly have done, had they wished to include in the idea of faith, the whole of our evangelical obedience. Of *this*, indeed, faith is the spring and foundation, and when cordial and lasting, will assuredly produce it; but still it is no part of its nature or essence.

But it is objected, does not St. James say, expressly,† that a “man is justified by works, and not by *faith only*?” In answer to this common objection, it is necessary to consider, first, the preceding verses of this chapter of St. James’ epistle; and then to show that they contain nothing contradictory to the *doctrine of justification by faith alone*, delivered by St. Paul.

The tenth and following verses to the 24th, in which St. James maintains *justification by works*, and not *by faith alone*, evidently admit the following short paraphrase:

V. 14. “And *let* (not any Jew or Christian think his faith sufficient to justify and save him, without those works of charity and mercy here spoken of, v. 8–13, for) *what doth it profit*, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith,” (i. e. in words

* 1 Thess. i. 3.

† ii. 24.

profess faith in God, v. 19, or in Christ, v. 1,) "and have not works" (to evidence the truth of that profession,) can (such a naked, fruitless) "faith save him?"

V. 15. "If a brother or sister be naked, or destitute of daily food,"

V. 16. "And one of you say unto him, depart in peace, and be you warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which be needful for the body, what doth it profit?"

V. 17. "Even so faith," professed with the mouth, "if it hath not works" answerable to that profession, and flowing from it, "is dead," and fruitless as those words are, "being alone;" that is, without works showing its reality.

V. 18. "Yea, a man may say," to such a believer, "thou hast," in profession, "faith, and I have" real "works: show me thy faith," which thou professest, "without thy works," which thou canst never do, faith being seated in the heart, and only discoverable by its effects, "and I will show thee by my works my faith," as the cause is manifested by the effect.

V. 19. "Thou," being a Jew, "believest there is one God. Thou" in this, "doest well;" but doest no more than the very devils, for "the devils also believe and tremble;" and if thou hast no better faith than they, thou hast the same reason to tremble which they have.

V. 20. "But wilt thou know, O vain man," who makest profession of such a naked faith, "that faith without works is dead," and so unable to justify or save thee; see it in the example of that very Abraham whom thou boastest as thy father.

V. 21. For, "was not Abraham," whom we style "our father, justified by works," proceeding from his faith, "when he had offered his son Isaac upon the altar?" Confiding that God was able to raise him from the dead.*

* Heb. ii. 17, 19.

V. 22. "Seest thou how," [*Greek, thou seest by this example,*] that "faith wrought with his works," to produce them, "and by works was faith made perfect," or elevated in him to the highest degree of excellence.

V. 23. "And the Scripture was again" "fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed in God, and it," that is, that faith which produced these works, "was accounted to him for righteousness, and" upon that account, "he was called the friend of God."

V. 24. "Ye see, then, how that by works," proceeding from faith, "a man is justified, and not by faith only," that is, being alone and without them.

From this short paraphrase arises a satisfactory answer to the objection alleged from St. James' epistle. The scope of his argument does not interfere with the doctrine of St. Paul, as they do not view justification under the same aspect and circumstances in their respective passages concerning it. When St. Paul says, we are justified "by faith, without the works of the law," and that "to him that worketh not, but believeth in him, that justifieth the ungodly, faith is imputed for righteousness," or to justification—the justification there attributed to faith, without works, imports only our absolution from condemnation on account of our past sins, committed before faith in Christ; and our reconciliation to God, by receiving pardon for them, by their not being imputed to those who believe in him. The whole drift of his argument goes to show, that it was necessary, in the first instance, for both Jew and Gentile to be justified freely by grace, and not by works, because they were all under sin, and had "come short of the glory of God."* "Whereas," says he, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, and rejoice in the hope of God's glory."† "The law," says he again, "was our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ, that we might be justi-

* Rom. iii. 1.

† Rom. v.

fied by faith ; but now, after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster," that is, under the tuition of the law, "for ye are all the children of God through Christ Jesus."* Here the Apostle plainly insinuates, that we cannot be justified by the works of the law, because the law leads us to Christ for justification. And again, "we are justified by grace, not of works ; for we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works."† Where the argument seems to run thus, "we cannot be justified by works preceding faith, because we perform no works truly good with respect to eternal life, until, *by faith*, we are interested in Christ Jesus. Such is the plain doctrine of St. Paul : whereas, St. James speaks evidently of those works which follow faith in Christ, are wrought by it, and are its natural effect. He inculcates their necessity, in order to our continuance in a state of justification, and exemption from final condemnation. The one speaks of the act of pardon on the part of God, his act of justification of the sinner, on his cordial belief in Christ, in the first instance—the other, of the continuance of this act of justification ; of its efficacy in constituting the believer in Christ a friend and child of God, as long as his faith continues to work by love, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, and no longer. St. Paul speaks of *believing from the heart* ; St. James of a faith *dead* and *fruitless*. St. Paul speaks of an *operative faith* ; St. James of a faith which, though it might have justified the believer at first, ceases to do so, when it ceases to act, and to show itself in righteousness of life. St. Paul speaks of a *faith*, which receives Christ as a lawgiver and a sovereign, as well as a Redeemer, and of course of a *faith* which virtually includes a sincere disposition and firm determination to keep all his commandments. St. James of a *faith*, which consists merely in believing speculative truths, without any concern for the practice of

* Gal. iii.

† Ephes. ii. 10.

Christian obedience. And thus it appears, that the doctrine of St. Paul is perfectly consistent with that of St. James. Man is assuredly justified by *that faith alone*, which is described by the former Apostle, and *nòt by that alone*, which is described by the latter. The first procures our pardon and acceptance on the part of God; by it *alone* we stand justified before him, and continue to enjoy that mighty blessing and privilege, unless our belief degenerate into that barren and dead faith, which produces no fruits of righteousness, the only evidences of a faith active and justifying. By works, therefore, springing from this faith as from their root and foundation, God is induced to perpetuate his first act of pardon and acceptance, and so far St. James declares the sinner to be justified by works. And, indeed, it is only by works that a habit of saving faith can be formed and maintained; for “faith without works is dead.” “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God,” says St. John;* but he adds in the same chapter, “Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world.” Whence it follows, that, in the sense of the Apostle, he believeth not “that Jesus is the Christ,” who, by virtue of that faith, does not overcome the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Wherefore, it appears very evidently, that St. John, as well as the other Apostolic writers, considered *that* alone to be *true faith* which was productive of obedience,—which, though not formally, yet virtually includes it, as causes virtually contain their effects. So that the difference between men of candour and judgment, as to saving faith, lies more in words than in substance, all agreeing in this, that we cannot be saved by *that faith* which does not produce in us sincere obedience to the laws of Christ. And now, &c. &c. &c.

* 1 John v. 1.

S E R M O N V.

THE NEW CREATURE.

THEREFORE IF ANY MAN BE IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATURE.

2 Cor. v. 17.

ALTHOUGH it be certain, from God's own word, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—that he gave himself a ransom for all—that he tasted death for every man,—and that he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; yet it is certain, also, that there are many sinners, who shall not be saved by him. To impute this circumstance to any deficiency of *power* in *Him*, who is almighty to save, or to any deficiency of inclination in *Him*, who died for all, and would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, would be an assertion little short of open blasphemy. What Christ, therefore, said formerly to the Jews :* “ye will not come to me, that ye might have life;” may be applied to the greatest part of mankind, and even to many of those, who profess to believe in Him, and hope from Him, for life and salvation. This profession, and this hope, are deemed the sum and limits of their obligations. Christ to them appears in no other light than the founder of their religion, and they conceive of him precisely as the Turks do of *Mahomet*, the Hindoos of *Brama*, or the Jews of *Moses*. Whereas, if their belief of, and in Christ, were such as they find commanded in his Gospel, their views

* John v. 40.

of his religion would be very different from what they are, and through Him, they would certainly arrive at salvation. This divine religion would, in this case, work such a mighty change within them, as would amount to a new moral creation. A true belief would cause them to *be in Christ*, and the Apostle here tells us, that, in such a supposition, they would be new creatures. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," old things are passed away, and "behold all things are become new in Him." And in another place he expressly says,* "that in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature;" or, (as the word may be rendered with more propriety in this passage) a *new creation*, for the Greek word *κτισις*, signifies both *creation* and *creature*; so that the meaning is, in the Christian religion, the only thing absolutely necessary, is the new *creation*, whereby man is renewed by the putting away of his whole natural depravity.

In order to place this fundamental doctrine of our religion in its true point of view, we will consider, *first*, the meaning of the words to *be in Christ*; and *secondly*, what it is to *be a new creature*.

To be in Christ, is a phrase so often made use of in the word of God, that I conceive it must contain more energy and latitude, than appear on the face of it. It would be superfluous to cite all the passages where this expression occurs, and its meaning is ascertained. Two or three will be sufficient for our purpose. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."† From which words we must necessarily conclude, that to *be in Christ*, means not only to be members of his Church, but to be united morally with his person; to be interested in his merits, for the pardon of their sins, and to be justified by his righteousness: for were this not the case, they would be assuredly condemned. The same Apostle, in another

* Gal. vi. 15.

† Rom. viii. 1.

place, having enumerated his own privileges, and righteousness, which he enjoyed in the law, concludes in these words : “ but what things were gain for me, those I counted loss for Christ, yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be *found in Him*, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.”*

In which words we may readily observe, that to *be in Christ*, he conceives to be a blessing and happiness of the highest order. To *win him*, to be *found in him*, to profess his righteousness, as belonging to himself, and to be so intimately united with him, as to have a common and personal interest in whatever concerns him. This divine and heavenly union is explained in the clearest manner, by an appropriate similitude, which Christ himself made use of to his disciples.†

“ Abide in me,” says he, “ and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches.” Here we are said to be in Christ, as a branch is in the vine ; and as this partakes of all the nourishment and juices which by invisible tubes are distributed through the plant, and is supplied by the stock with sap proportionable to its capacity and need ; so they who *are in Christ*, partake of his personal influence, and according to their limited capacities, are filled with the riches of his grace. And to render the manner and process of this sacred union still more palpable and clear, the Apostle tells us that it does not belong to our nature, but that it may be compared to the union of a branch to a tree, which is not propagated naturally with it, but afterwards inoculated or grafted into it.‡ “ And if,” says he, “ some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among

* Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9.

† John xv. 4, 5.

‡ Rom. ii. 17.

them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree." By nature, therefore, we are all of the old stock, of the wild olive tree; which is *Adam*: but God, whom our Saviour here represents under the allegory of a husbandman, mercifully separates us from this barren stock, and grafts us into Christ; so that we are, in some degree, incorporated with him, and our moral existence depends on him more intimately, than our physical existence on our original progenitor. I say *more* intimately; as a spiritual union is more perfect than any other. "He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit,"* which, of course, must be the most excellent species of union that can possibly be imagined.

To attain to this heavenly communion with Christ, so as to be *found in him*, true faith in him is the means and the condition; for "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have life everlasting,"† and this it is certain can only be had through him and in him; for as the Apostle says,‡ "we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." So that our confidence in Christ causes us to partake of him, and to be interested in him after such a manner, that we become what the Apostle calls a *new creature*. But as Nicodemus was perplexed to know how a man, *when he is old, can be born again*, so many, perhaps, will have still greater reason to inquire how a thing once created, can be created anew. True, indeed it is, that as to its substance and essence, nothing can undergo a second creation; but forms and qualities may be so modified and altered, as to excite an idea of a new creation.

The body of man was not originally created, or produced out of nothing; but from the dust of the ground which had been previously created, and yet being modelled by God, and inspired with the breath of life, he is styled with pro-

* 1 Cor. vi. 17.

† John iii. 16.

‡ Heb. iii. 14.

priety God's creature. In like manner, although a man's soul and body be not raised again out of nothing, yet if he be raised out of a state of sin, and inspired with the Holy Spirit of God himself, he may be truly said to become a *new creature*; for morally speaking, he is now a different person from what he was, "being transformed by the renewing of his mind."* "Old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new." His ideas are changed, as well as his affections, and he measures things both temporal and eternal, by the standard of faith. "He has put off the old man with his deeds, and has put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created him"†—or, as it is expressed in another place, "He has put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness."‡

It is only by comparing these two states of nature with each other, that the scriptural meaning of a *new creature* can be accurately understood; and as in a late discourse I endeavoured to exhibit a picture of man in his unregenerate state, we will now consider him as created anew into a newness of life, and thus we shall be enabled easily to discern what a mighty change is accomplished in him, and with how much propriety he is called a *new creature*. For the fact is, as a rational, accountable creature, a renewed person is altogether different from what he was. His mind is purified, his conscience purged from dead works, and all his faculties reduced to their primitive harmony and order. He is turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. His eyes are opened upon an invisible world, which he feels to be as real as that which he inhabits. He retains Almighty God continually in his sight; contemplates his wisdom, his power, his goodness, and his mercy; conceives his glory shining constantly *about* him, and *in* him, inflaming his whole soul with love, and joy, and confidence unspeakable.

* Rom. xii. 2.

† Col. iii. 9, 10.

‡ Eph. iv. 22, 23, 24.

He now lives by faith, and not by sense, and therefore all sensible objects appear to him in their genuine colours and dimensions ; obscure and diminutive, in comparison of those exalted, spiritual, and glorious objects, which are habitually before him. While engaged with these, he not only avoids all scandalous and notorious crimes, but sins of every description, to the utmost of his power. Secret sins, as well as such as are public, being equally transgressions against God's law, are alike the objects of his hatred and abhorrence. He dares no more defraud his neighbour in his shop, than rob him on the road ; nor to injure his reputation, than deprive him of his life. This world is comparatively little or nothing to him. His hopes and expectations are centered in a better. His treasure is there, and, of course, there is his heart also. He uses the blessings of life in such a manner, as to be able, at a future day, to render a comfortable account of their employment ; but his main business is to live always in the true faith and fear of God, and under his fostering care and protection. For this purpose he endeavours to cherish a spirit of devotion, by raising his heart to God upon every occasion ; by making every occurrence of life, every object of created nature, subservient to some pious emotion, some sentiment of praise and thanksgiving. He appreciates with due attachment and affection every opportunity of joining in the public worship of the Church. He prepares himself for it at home, and enters upon it with such earnestness and zeal, as clearly evince that he considers it as the most important business of his life. When engaged in prayer, he prostrates himself before Almighty God with heart-felt reverence and godly fear, lifting up his mind, as well as his hands to Him that dwelleth in the heavens. In the psalms and hymns he chaunts forth with sweet and affectionate melody his admiration and worship and praise of that almighty and all-glorious being so infinitely above him, and yet so infinitely gracious and condescending to him. He hears the word of

God, whether read or preached unto him; and receives it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, working effectually in them that believe, and inducing them to order their conversation according to all holiness and godliness of living. He is sound, orthodox, and steadfast in the faith, not tossed *to* and *fro* with every wind of doctrine, but adhering firmly to that which was once delivered to the saints, and has ever since been professed by the Catholic Church. He is sincerely devout and pious towards God, ever solicitous to serve and honour and please him. He is meek and lowly in his own eyes; modest, sober and temperate in all things; true and faithful to his word, just and righteous in his dealings, kind and charitable to the poor, as far as his circumstances will allow. He honours all men, loves the brotherhood, fears God, and submits conscientiously to lawful authority. In short, he endeavours all he can to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless: and if he chance to stumble or fall, he rises again immediately, and walks more circumspectly in future; for which purpose he omits no opportunity of renewing his resolutions at the Lord's table, and drawing from that sacred institution, fresh supplies of grace to strengthen his weakness and reanimate his zeal. This is the life, the *new* life, which he constantly leads, and therefore he may well be termed a *new creature*.

Having thus briefly explained what it is to be *in Christ*, and to be a *new creature*, let us consider, in the next place, how these two ideas are connected together, so as to establish the truth of this proposition. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" and this more especially because it may seem to contradict the yet common observation, that Christians are generally as bad as other men, and the moral state of Christendom, as depraved as that of any heathen nations whatever. For it must be confessed, to our shame and sorrow, that the observation is not more commonly made than it is generally true,—the greater portion of those who are

called Christians, deserving as little to be called *new* and *holy* creatures, as if the name of Christ had never been heard among them. They embrace and profess the Christian religion, much in the same manner as the Turks do that of Mahomet, merely because it is the religion of their country, transmitted to them from their ancestors, and professed by those with whom they daily converse. What wonder, then, that like other men, who take up their religion as an accidental thing, they neither examine its merits nor calculate its advantages, nor feel its power to convert them into new moral creatures. But the fact is, as the Apostle assures us,—“they are not *all* Israel, that are of Israel.”* “Neither is he a Jew which is one outwardly . . . but he is a Jew which is one inwardly . . . whose praise is not of men, but of God.”† And so is it with nominal Christians. He only is a true Christian, who by an inward and lively faith in Christ, partakes of his Spirit, and to this is indebted for his justification and sanctification before God,—for being taken out, as it were, of the first Adam, and united by faith to the second. *This*, as I have shown, is the true meaning of the phrase, *to be in Christ*, and the person to whom it applies, must be a *new creature*. “He is created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”‡ The end, therefore, of this new creation, is the performance of good works, which unless he *be in Christ*, no man can perform. And this leading truth of our religion, Christ himself expressly teaches us. He says, in the first place, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”§ Here he speaks, we may observe, of the very subject of our discussion, viz. of our *being in him*. “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, my Father, (as the husbandman,) taketh it away.” By which words, how-

* Rom. ix. 6. † Ibid. ii. 28, 29. ‡ Eph. ii. 10. § John, xv. 12.

ever, we must not understand, that any fruitless branches can be really in him, for such can only *appear* to be so. This difficulty is cleared up, by our Saviour himself, in another passage very similar to this. "Whoever hath not," says he, "from him shall be taken away, even that he hath."* It may be asked, how can this be? How can a man both have and not have? Or, how can any thing be taken from him who has nothing? But, in another place, the sentiment is expressed in the clearest manner. "Whoever hath not," says he,† "from him shall be taken even that which he *seemeth* to have." These graces, therefore, were merely apparent,—they existed not in reality,—and, in the same manner, the branches which are said to be in Christ, and yet remain fruitless, are united to him merely by a seeming and nominal union. And that this is the meaning of the passage appears, further, from the following words: "I am the vine," says he, "and ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, ye can do nothing."‡ It is evident, therefore, that as no man can do any thing available to salvation without Christ, so neither can any person abide really in him, without producing much fruit, and, of course, without becoming a new creature. The beloved disciple,§ speaking of Christ, confirms explicitly this important tenet. "Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not." And the reason is, because "they who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."|| Their "old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed; that henceforth they should not serve sin."¶ Now, if the old man be crucified with Christ, they must become new men in him. If the body of sin be destroyed, the body of grace must be formed in them. If they cease to serve sin, they must serve God, as it is a sin not

* Matt. xiii. 12.

† Luke, viii. 18.

‡ Ibid. v. 5.

§ 1 John, iii. 6.

|| Gal. v. 24,

¶ Rom. vi. 6.

to serve him. If they dwell in him, they must receive of his fulness and be fortified by his power. "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me,"* says St. Paul ; and surely he who can do this, must, of course, be a *new creature*.

But to make this still more plain and evident, let us consider, that Christ being the eternal and only begotten Son of God, they who abide in him by a quick and lively faith, must also become in him the sons of God. And, indeed, it is written, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name."† Now, if they be the sons of God, they are born again of God himself ; if born again, they are *new men* ; and if born again of God the Creator, they must be *new* creatures, and lead *new* lives—actuated by his holy Spirit, now become the principle of a new life in them, and enabling them to support the glorious character of new creatures in Christ. Well, therefore, may we conclude, with the Apostle, that "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

And now, my brethren, from this short explanation of one of the leading doctrines of our religion, among many remarkable things we may observe, *first*, that no man can be a *new creature*, except he be in Christ, for the Apostle lays down this as the very foundation of this new moral creation. He does not say, if a man be of the Church of Rome, or of the Church of England, ■ Lutheran, or a Calvinist, he is therefore a *new creature*. But, "if a man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Hence it evidently follows, that if without being a new creature, by regeneration and adoption, no man can inherit eternal life, so no person can attain to it without being really in Christ, or, in other words, a true Christian ; for it must be evident that no man can receive an inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith in

* Phil. iv. 13.

† John, i. 12.

Christ, unless he himself be sanctified also. Let presumptuous men, therefore, extol as much as they please, the light of human reason, and the power of natural religion, they will find at last, that they may as well undertake to create a new physical world, as to make these instrumental to a new moral creation. They may eulogize virtue, and exclaim against vice, and with some plausibility apply the principles of moral philosophy to enforce the one and discountenance the other; but as well may they attempt to produce something out of nothing, as to turn a man from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, by these principles. This can only be done by the Almighty power of God, who never exerts this power, but through Him, by whom in the beginning he made heaven and earth. Wherefore, unless a man be in Christ Jesus, he may rest assured that he is not a *new creature*.

Again, we may observe, from hence, that as he who is not in Christ, is not a new creature; so, on the other hand, he who is not a new creature, is *not* in Christ. A man, therefore, may make what pretensions he pleases,—he may be baptized in his name,—he may be a member of his Church,—he may confess him to be his Saviour, and profess to honour him as his Lord and Master,—he may discountenance and abhor the enemies of his name, and proclaim them, as they are, the pests of society. He may admire his sayings, and listen attentively to his Word; and yet, after all, unless he becomes a *new creature*, his faith is fallacious, and he has no interest in him. He abides not in Christ, and therefore has no reason to expect any thing at his hands. Has not he himself expressly said, “Not every one, that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.”* Now this holy will can be accomplished only by those who abide in Christ, and of course they only can

* Matt. vii. 21.

enter into the kingdom of heaven ; that where the Head is, they, the members, may be also,—whereas, all such as remain in an unconverted state, without God and *without Christ*, are pronounced by the Apostle to be “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”* And the only reason of this woful situation is, “they are not in Christ, on whom alone the Church is founded,—in whom alone the new covenant is established,—in whom alone all the mercy we can hope for, is promised,—and in whom alone God ever was, and ever will be, gracious and merciful to any man. All, who are conscious of not being new creatures in Christ Jesus, and perceive, on examining the state of their consciences, that they have no foundation for hope in his redemption, would do well to ponder these things with becoming seriousness ; and, if they have any religious sentiments about them, to calculate, while yet they may, the woful consequences of “falling into the hands of the living God,” which they must inevitably do, who have no interest in Christ, and reject all the proposed terms of salvation,—for it would be rash and presumptuous folly for them who are born in sin, and live and die in it, to expect a milder fate. All the principles of justice, all the attributes of the Deity concur in obviating and extinguishing such delusive ideas, and this consideration alone should effectually persuade us “to put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupted according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”†

Thrice happy, they who have *chosen this better part*, who have adopted this *one thing needful*, who being thus taken out of the *old* and grafted into the *new* Adam, are made new creatures in him. In this noble capacity they

* Eph. ii. 12.

† Ibid. iv. 22, 24.

enjoy every means and ingredient of happiness. In Christ they are blessed with forgiveness of sins. They are endowed with all the graces of the Spirit conducive to holiness. In *Him* they have wisdom to direct them in all their ways, and power to protect them against all their enemies. In *Him* the Eternal is well pleased with them; becomes their friend, and styles them his children. In *Him* they inherit the whole extent of the mighty purchase which he has made for them by the pouring out of his soul unto death; all they can want or desire to render them completely and everlastingly happy.

Now, if these things be so, as undoubtedly they are, who would not long and strive *to be in Christ*? Who would not wish to become a *new creature*? And, blessed be God, this enviable state is within the reach of us all. For Christ died for all, and therefore is ready to receive all, who come unto him. “Him that cometh unto me,” says he, “I will in no wise cast out.”* Let us, then, take him at his word,—approach him with confidence,—and close in with the terms of salvation held out in the Gospel. For this end, let us watch and pray, and hear, and read, and meditate upon his holy Word; and act, in all things, as this Word prescribes; so that we may dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, and be made one with him. But in all these our Christian exertions, let us still trust in him “to create in us a clean heart, and to renew a right spirit within us,”—to model us after his own heart,—to keep us firm and steadfast in true faith and fear,—that we may both live and die in *Him*, our dear and ever blessed Redeemer,—the eternal, the only begotten Son of God,—to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, for ever and ever.

* John, vi. 37.

SERMON VI.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

NOW IF ANY MAN HAVE NOT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, HE IS NONE OF HIS.—*Rom. viii. 9.*

THESE words present us with an occasion to speak of the holy Spirit of God, and of the wonderful works which he has done, and still does in the world. But, alas! who is sufficient for these things? “Who can express the noble acts of the Lord, or show forth all his praise?” Who can describe his infinite glory, or declare his gifts and graces, which are innumerable? This is a subject which would claim the pen or tongue of an angel. We mortals know nothing of him, but what he has been pleased to reveal in his holy Word; and what we read of him there, can no farther affect our minds, than he himself is pleased to open our understandings to this important truth. Our comfort, however is, that our blessed Saviour has assured us, that he, and in him, our heavenly Father “will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” Wherefore, although but dust and ashes, we will presume to speak of him from the words of the text—“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

And here we may begin by observing, that in the former part of this verse, he is called the *Spirit of God*, and in the latter, the *Spirit of Christ*, to teach us, that he is the Spirit of Christ, as Christ is God, and that Christ is truly God, one with the Father; otherwise the same Spirit could

not be the Spirit of Christ and of God also. And as he is thus called in holy Scripture, sometimes the *Spirit of God*, at others, the *Spirit of Christ*; so he is frequently styled emphatically the *Holy Spirit*; or, which is the same thing, the *Holy Ghost*—especially where the three divine persons are all mentioned together,* and this, no doubt, to show, that although he be the Spirit both of the Father and the Son, yet so as to appear a distinct person from both, as each of the other persons also is; “for there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.” Wherefore, whatsoever personal, though, to us, incomprehensible distinctions, there may be between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, either among themselves, or in their operations, we must still believe them all three to be but one and the same God; for, as St. Paul expresses it,† “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all.” *Here*, we find, is one Spirit, one Lord Jesus, one God the Father; each and all *working all in all*, and, therefore, must necessarily be *all one*, and the same first cause of all; or, in other words, one God.

When, therefore, we think of God the Son, in his peculiar quality of our Redeemer and Saviour, we must conceive of him as the one living and true God, who made and governs the world, and, of course, praise and magnify him as such, as the holy Virgin did when she said, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour.” So that when we read, as in the text, or speak of the Spirit of Christ, although we must believe the Spirit to be one person, and Christ another, yet we must still believe them to be of one Divine nature, the one almighty and eternal God, whether acting as Father, Son, or Holy Ghost. As

* Matt. xxviii. 19; ■ Cor. xiii. 14; 1 John v. 7. † 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5, 6.

in the former part of this verse it is said, "If the Spirit of God dwell in you;" and in the next verse, "If Christ be in you;" so in several other Scriptures, "Christ and the Spirit are said to *be*, and dwell in us," giving us to understand by the indiscriminate use of these expressions, that, wheresoever either of them dwells, *that* is the temple of God.*

But, for what reason is the Holy Ghost styled in this place, in a special manner, "the Spirit of Christ?" A short inquiry on this subject is important, because every Scriptural expression has a proper and determinate meaning. The reason, then, of his being called in this place the *Spirit of Christ*, I take to be this.—The Apostle is here speaking of the Holy Spirit as given by Christ to those who believe in him, and to none else. "If any man," says he, "have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" and, therefore, it was with great propriety that he should be called *His* Spirit, by whom he is given. We may observe, moreover, that the Holy Spirit, by whom the eternal will has been communicated to mankind, who inspired in the old times the Prophets, and their successors the Apostles, is expressly denominated the Spirit of Christ, and that, too, by his own positive direction. "Of which salvation," says St. Peter, "the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify."† The same thing appears also in the Prophets themselves; for they, speaking as they were moved by the Spirit of Christ, Christ himself often speaks in them, of himself, as one with that Spirit by which they speak, as where he says, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots on my vesture."‡ Many similar passages occur in the Prophets, where Christ himself speaks of himself in his own person, to convince

* 1 Cor. iii. 16.

† 1 Pet. i. 2.

Psalm xxiii. 18, &c.

us that they spake by his Spirit: and that *He* was meant whenever they began their annunciations with "Thus saith the Lord." Hence, also, it was, that Christ promised his Apostles to *send* the Holy Spirit unto them, in order to let them know, that by *His* Spirit they should be actuated and directed in preaching and propagating his Gospel to mankind. Thus, we see, that all the revelations which God has given us of himself and his holy will, are communicated by his Spirit, considered, in a special manner, as the Spirit of Christ, the great Prophet of the world.

Further, as God our Saviour has thus revealed his will to our race by his Holy Spirit, so, by the same Spirit, he enables us both to know and to perform this his will, which is more than any would be otherwise capable of doing; for, although the original words in which he signifies to us the objects of our belief and duty, may be plain and clear, yet the belief and obligations contained in them are, in some instances, so remote from our comprehension, or so opposed to our corrupt inclinations, that we cannot receive or comply with them as we ought. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* Sensible objects are discerned by the senses, and such as are rational by the faculty of reason; but spiritual things can only be perceived and felt through the Spirit of God, who reveals them. Men, in other respects of extensive capacities and profound erudition, are unable to conceive how these things can be, as they cannot make them harmonize with the principles of science, or the prevailing notions of mankind. They are not taught of God, nor endowed and assisted with his Spirit, and therefore must be ignorant of its sanctifying operations. But with those who are influenced by the Spirit of Christ, the case is very different. By him, their minds are

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

so powerfully enlightened, that they see and feel the truth of his divine communications with a conviction surpassing that which arises from the senses. By him they are preserved from all fatal errors, and led into all saving truth, and induced to embrace it with eagerness and affection. By him they become as fully certain of the great mysteries of religion as the philosopher is of his clearest demonstrations. By him moving upon their souls, and creating a right frame within them, they are renewed and sanctified in the spirit of their minds, so as clearly to discern the vast difference between good and evil, between what God has commanded, and what he has forbidden ; and of course, to choose the one, and reject the other. Their thoughts, their understandings, their judgments, and their affections, are all so renovated, that they not only perceive, but feel and relish all the divine truths and laws which they find revealed in the Holy Scriptures by the same Spirit, who renews their hearts. Such are truly said to “have the Spirit of Christ,” and therefore belong to him.

But, “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” If any man be not thus influenced and sanctified, he is not in the number of those whom Christ regards as his own peculiar people, the objects of his special care, and continual intercession.

To understand this, we must always remember that although Christ died for all men, and of course, has placed all in a capacity to be saved, yet it is a lamentable truth, that all men will not be saved by him, but such only as by faith in him shall apply the merits of his death to their souls, in order to obtain pardon and justification before God. But this, alas, a great part of mankind will not do. I speak not of Jews, Turks, and other Infidels, but of those who, with an outward profession of religion, know little or nothing of its spirit. These persons believe not in him, as he requires in his Gospel, with a faith which purifies their hearts, and unites them to him, rendering them sound

members of the body, of which he is the head. These are the only persons whom Christ reckons for his own. None others have any part or portion in him. They are abandoned to the wide world, and to the general providence of God,—while such as live by a quick and lively faith in him, as their only Lord and Saviour, and conduct themselves agreeably to this faith, are regarded by him as his own,—his inheritance,—his lot,—his peculiar people,—his friends,—his treasure,—his sheep,—his flock,—his disciples,—indeed, his brethren,—yea, his very members, according to their respective places and stations in his body, the Church. For *these*, the Scriptures continually assure us, he entertains a special kindness. For *these* he is now continually appearing in the presence of God making atonement and reconciliation for them. For *these* he prays, not for the world, but for those whom God has given him out of the world.

It follows very clearly, therefore, that no man, whatsoever his outward condition may be, can belong to Christ, so as to be saved by him, unless he have the Spirit of Christ, because it is by this Spirit only that any man can be his. By this Spirit only can we be incorporated into him, and made members of his mystical body. “For,” says the Apostle,* “by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body,” even the body of Christ. So that we become the members of Christ, and belong to him,—for this reason only, because the same Spirit that is in *Him*, is likewise in us, and moves, animates, and influences us, in all the actions of the new and spiritual life. Hence, says the Apostle,† “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God,” and therefore Christ himself condescends to call them *brethren*.‡ St. John also tells us,§ “Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he has given us.”

* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

† Rom. viii. 13.

‡ Heb. ii. 11.

§ 1 John, iii. 24.

And again,* “Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit;” thus making our bodies temples of the Holy Ghost, and of course transferring us over to him, whose Spirit the Holy Ghost undoubtedly is, making us “joint heirs with him, who is heir of all things.” Of this there can be no doubt. “He has given us the earnest of the Spirit,”† says the Apostle, which, in another place,‡ he declares to be “the earnest of the inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.” And by this we are said to be sealed “to the day of redemption.”§ By this seal, at the *great day*, the sheep shall be known from the goats,—the heirs of heaven from the children of disobedience,—and then it will appear to an assembled world, that “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.”

We see, then, of what infinite importance it is to every person, to possess the Spirit of Christ. No other concern can bear any comparison with this. For, since Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of mankind,—since he saves none but such as belong to him,—and since none are his, but such as have the Spirit, it clearly follows, that unless we have his Spirit, we shall be undone for ever. So that, if we consult our essential welfare, we must make it the principal study and business of our lives to obtain the Spirit of Christ; for certain it is, that without *this*, all other attainments will prove to be ultimately vexation of soul. But with this Spirit, we shall attain to solid and never-ending enjoyments; for to us will be addressed this blessed invitation, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”||

But the great question is, how are we to possess the Spirit of Christ? Or, what must be done to obtain it? The answer is, that Christ having assumed the common nature

* 1 John, iv. 13.

† 2 Cor. i. 22.

‡ Eph. i. 14.

§ Ibid. iv. 30.

|| Matt. xxv. 34.

of all men, all are doubtless capable of receiving his Spirit. But that none do actually receive it, but such as are united to him, and become members of his body. Now, in order to become thus united with Christ, and to possess his Spirit, it is necessary, in the first place, that we *believe* in him. The Apostle, speaking of him in his Epistle to the Ephesians, says : “ In whom after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” Upon those only, therefore, who believe in him, can his Spirit be conferred. And these, moreover, must be *baptized* into him, for baptism is the ordinance appointed by himself, by which our belief in him must be testified, and the usual mean by which his Spirit is bestowed; and we become his. It is “ the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”* By it we are “ born of water and the Spirit,”†—water being the sign, and the Holy Ghost the thing signified, whereby we are “ born again, and made the children of God,” and engrafted into the mystical body of his Son. The original words of the institution clearly indicate this effect, “ Go ye, therefore, and make all nations disciples, by baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”‡ And being thus made his disciples by this instituted rite, we become members of his body, the Church, and of course partake of his Holy Spirit.

And, here it may be proper to observe, the importance and necessity of this sacrament, where it may be had; and how very dangerous their condition is, who despise or neglect it, as is the case with too many, even of our Church, which expressly declares it to be “ generally necessary to salvation.” From my own entire conviction of the importance of this doctrine, founded, as I conceive, on the plainest declarations of Scripture, and taught, with few exceptions, and those very recent, through every age of the Christian Church, I would wish all who hear me, seriously

* Tit. iii. 5.

† John, iii. 5.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 19.

to consider, that as Christ is the only Saviour of the world, so we know that he saves those who are members of his own body, the Church, by means of a rite appointed for that very purpose,—a rite which translates us from a state of nature into a state of salvation,—entitles us to his covenanted mercies, on which alone we may safely rely, and engages to bestow on us his Spirit, “without which we can be none of his.” I say it entitles us to his *covenanted* mercies, and therefore, whatever other mercies he may have in reserve for those who from the prejudices of education, or candid examination, deem this sacrament unnecessary, mercies which we are not permitted either to canvass or abridge, yet surely a wise man would not choose to incur any risk in so momentous a concern, when he possesses the plain word of God for his warrant and guide. If, by baptism, we become regular and living members of Christ’s body, which is his Church, we, of course, must be actuated by his Spirit, and so are truly his.

Wherefore, as it is my bounden duty, on the one hand, earnestly and affectionately to exhort and entreat those, who have not been baptized into Christ’s Church, seriously to ponder, as in the presence of God, the arguments which the Scriptures furnish for the necessity of this positive rite, and to decide whether the omission has proceeded from absolute inattention, or rational conviction; so, on the other hand, permit me to remind those who have been so happy, as to be “born of water and the Spirit,” not to lose the Spirit which they then received. For this will be the case, if they either renounce the faith, into which they were baptized, or live in the constant violation of the vows, and covenant, which they then took upon them.

It is, indeed, not to be denied, that there are some, nay, probably many, who although once baptized, and made the children of God, and heirs of heaven, have proved afterwards so undutiful and disobedient, and “to every good work reprobate,” that their heavenly Father has cast them

off,—disinherited them,—and suffers his Spirit to strive no longer with them. But the case of such, though very deplorable, is not altogether desperate,—for having been once admitted into the number of God's children, he still regards them with an eye of pity, and, upon their return to their duty, is ready to receive them again,—to renew them in the Spirit of their minds, and, as one of the terms of their baptismal covenant, is prepared to pardon them on their sincere and effectual repentance. To them, I say, who have been received into his family, and made his children by adoption and grace, He, as their heavenly Father, will give the Holy Ghost, if they repent them heartily of their sins, and admit them again to his friendship and favour. What may be the case of others who have not been received into membership with his body, the Church, we are not authorized to pronounce how far their repentance may be available. But this we know, that as obedience must be at all times our duty, it is difficult to conceive how present repentance can release us from the punishment of former transgressions, unless a formal covenant be entered into for that purpose. Can repentance annihilate what is past? Or can we do more by present obedience, than acquit ourselves of present obligation? Or, does the contrition which we feel, added to the positive duties which we discharge, constitute a surplusage of merit, which may be transferred to the reduction of our former demerit? “We may as well affirm,” says a learned divine, “that our former obedience atones for our present sins, as that our present obedience makes amends for antecedent transgressions.” Since, then, neither experience nor the abstract reason of the thing, can furnish any link whereby to connect present obedience with forgiveness of former sins, it follows, that however the contemplation of God's infinite goodness and love might excite some hope that uncovenanted mercy would be extended to the sincerely penitent, yet the animating *certainty* of this momentous truth, without which

the religious sense can have no place, can be derived only from the express communication of the Deity alone; and this communication expressly tells us, "that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ," which, we have seen, no man can have without being a member of his body, "he is none of his."

But to the regularly initiated into the Church of Christ, this consideration affords no pretext for boasting, or presumptuous confidence. They must be always on their guard, not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed to the day of redemption."* They must do nothing to provoke so divine a guest, lest they provoke him to withdraw himself from them. "Quench not the Spirit,"† says the Apostle. Stifle not those pious emotions which he puts into your hearts, but cherish them with the fondest complacency, that ye may be "*fervent* in Spirit, *zealous* of good works, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labour will not be vain in the Lord."

Having, thus far, endeavoured to show you, that they only who have the Spirit of Christ are truly his, and how it may be obtained, if properly sought for, it would seem unnecessary to stimulate your endeavours after such an inestimable blessing. I would only wish you to consider, that unless you have the Spirit of Christ, you are still in *the flesh*, as the Apostle declares;‡ that is, in a natural or carnal state, in which no man can please God, or do any thing available to eternal life. Such are said to be without Christ, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants, without hope, and without God in the world."§

On the other hand, if you have the Spirit of Christ, and so are really his, who can describe the security and happiness of your situation? You will then be free from the

* Eph. iv. 30.

† 1 Thess. v. 19.

‡ v. 8.

§ Eph. ii. 12.

bondage of corruption, to which others are subject, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."* You will then "through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body," and live continually in newness of life. You will then bring forth "the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," and whatever other graces can adorn either your hearts, or lives, and render you acceptable in the sight of God. You will then be holy, as He, who has called you, is "holy in all manner of conversation." Jesus will be your continual and effectual intercessor. You will be safe and secure under the protection of the Almighty, and will fear no evil. You will live in the light of his countenance shining upon you, cheering and refreshing your spirits with hope unspeakable and full of glory. You possess, already, the joyful earnest of the inheritance, and therefore need not doubt but it will shortly be yours, "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."† And all because you have the Spirit of Christ, and are therefore His, to whom all things belong, and "to whom, together with the Father and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever." Amen.

* 2 Cor. iii. 17.

† 1 Pet. i. 4.

S E R M O N V I I .

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

AND THIS IS HIS NAME, WHEREBY HE SHALL BE CALLED THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.—*Jeremiah xxiii. 6.*

THE great and essential distinction betwixt the legal and evangelical dispensations, is accurately pointed out by the Apostle, where he tells us, that “the law is but the shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things.” Its types, ceremonies, and outward ordinances, are taken from the objects of temporal nature, which are, at best, but shadowy representations of eternal truth. “The comers thereunto” could never be perfected, by the most minute observation of its external rites. The pious, spiritual Jew, therefore, must have looked further than these, and considered every outward purification, as figuratively expressing an inward cleansing to be performed in their hearts. Moses, their inspired legislator, and the Prophets, who succeeded him, did not fail to acquaint them with the immediate and necessary reference of these temporal symbols to spiritual and eternal truths. Nevertheless, it appears but too evident, from the whole Jewish history, that the generality rested their hopes of salvation, merely upon their outward law. “They went about to establish a righteousness of their own,” founded upon a strict observance of the Levitical ceremonies, which were only adapted to their present circumstances, without paying the least attention to

that inward law of righteousness, to which these ceremonies referred. Hence it was, that their Prophets were directed by the Most High, to express, in the strongest terms, his disapprobation of those very ordinances, which he himself had originally instituted for their good; and to tell them, that “He had no pleasure in their burnt-offerings and sacrifices,—that their oblations were vain, and that incense was an abomination in his sight.” His displeasure was not with the ordinances themselves; for if considered and observed with proper views and dispositions, they would have been subservient to the most glorious purposes: but he was offended with the gross and flagrant abuses of them, which the people were daily committing. Hence also it was, that the same inspired Prophets, when the hand of the Highest drew aside the curtain of futurity, and exhibited to their astonished view the successive displays of Gospel light and truth, with all that variety of heavenly scenery, which his incarnate Son was to open upon our benighted world; hence it was, I say, that the same inspired Prophets were particularly careful to distinguish the new dispensation, by every figure and mode of expression that might lead the most dark and ignorant Jew to consider it as internal and spiritual. The righteousness of the new covenant is widely different from what the carnal Jews apprehended to be the righteousness of the old. With respect to their essence, their foundation, their motives and ends, both covenants are the same, differing only in the external mode of revelation; the old being “the shadow,” the new “the image of the good things to come;” the old pointing to Christ, the new revealing him in all his fulness to the faithful.

Christ Jesus, therefore, is, and must be, “the end of the law to those that believe;” that is, he is and must be, in himself, that very righteousness to which the law pointed, but which it could not attain. It served to instruct its dark and fallen pupils in the outward rudiments of divine truth, but could never communicate to them the light, life and

spirit of that real evangelical righteousness, which is only to be found in the *incarnate word of God*. It is for this reason, that the Prophet, speaking of the approaching kingdom of the Messiah, in whom all the law and the Prophets were to center, represents him as a "righteous branch springing forth from the root of David; as a king reigning, prospering, and executing judgment and justice on the earth; in consequence of whose mild and equitable administration, Judah should be saved, and Israel should dwell safely:" and as the most characteristical designation of his nature and office, tells us, that "this is his name, whereby he shall be called, the *Lord our righteousness*."

Let us then inquire, in the *first place*, why our blessed Redeemer has the name of *Righteousness* ascribed to him by the Prophet; and, *secondly*, what we are to understand by his being called *our Righteousness*.

I. A name in Scripture is generally put to express the intrinsic nature and qualities of the object named. When, therefore, the name of the Messiah is here said to be "righteousness," we must necessarily conclude, that righteousness is his very nature, his essence, the substance of all his attributes and perfections. He is not called *righteous*, but *righteousness* itself; the source and fountain, from whence all that is really and truly righteous, throughout the universe, perpetually proceeds.

Jesus Christ is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." All the beauties, excellencies, powers and virtues, which are insensibly hidden in the invisible Godhead, are substantially, virtually, inwardly, as well as outwardly, opened, revealed, and illustriously displayed in the person of the incarnate Redeemer. "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made, that was made. All the thrones, dominions, principalities and powers," possessed by angels, arch-angels, cherubim and seraphim, are derived from him; for,

“in, and through him did the Father create all things.” The highest degree of righteousness which the highest seraph can attain, is but a beam or efflux from this eternal sun. With glory undiminished, he imparts perpetually spiritual life and vigour to all those countless myriads of intelligences, which inhabit the whole compass of universal nature. He is himself the living law, the eternal rule of rectitude and order. God the Father hath “set this his king of righteousness on his holy hill of Sion.” Every outward institute revealed and written, which God hath, “at sundry times, and in divers manners,” delivered to the sons of men, was but a transcript of that original law, which lives for ever in the heart of Christ. “I am,” says he, “the way, the truth and the life;” “no man cometh unto the Father, but by me; ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life; without me ye can do nothing.” These are his own explicit declarations.

Nature, without this Christ of God, is impurity, emptiness, poverty, want and wretchedness extreme: whereas nature illuminated, enriched, refreshed, and glorified by Him, is holy, righteous, lovely, and supremely happy. Known, or unknown to our fallen race, it is He alone, who inspires every good thought, every righteous deed, every sentiment and action that is amiable and endearing.

In the acts of the Apostles we read of an altar with this inscription: “to the unknown God!” and St. Paul, taking occasion from this circumstance, tells the Athenians, “Him, whom ye ignorantly worship, preach I unto you.” “In the whole frame of nature,” says a truly sublime writer, “every heart, every creature, every affection, every action, is an altar with the same inscription—‘to the unknown righteousness! to the unknown Jesus.’ This is the eternal standard of truth, righteousness and perfection, to which every being in nature ignorantly moveth; this is that which all understandings, all hearts, cannot but admire and adore. But blessed above all beings are they, whose hearts are

spiritual altars, with the righteous person of Christ engraven upon them by the finger of God, flaming with the fire of heavenly love, and bearing this radiant inscription: 'to the known and experienced beauty and righteousness of that Jesus, whom we know; that word of life, which our eyes have seen, our ears have heard, our hands have handled, and spiritually embraced.' "

It would be wasting time to dwell further on the assertion, that righteousness belongs essentially to Christ; that it resides inherently in him, and is in fact his very nature. Let us, therefore, proceed to inquire, in the second place, what we are to understand by Christ's being called, *our righteousness*. It is, my brethren, a question of the first importance to those who wish to entertain sound and accurate ideas of their religious principles; involving the very fundamental doctrines of the Christian system. It discovers in what the virtues of the Gospel differ from those of worldly philosophy; in what the Christian must be distinguished from the mere moralist.

II. I have already observed to you, from Scripture, that God created all things, "in and by Jesus Christ," and that "without him was not any thing made that was made." Man, in particular, was "created in the image of God." Christ is the "brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person:" and therefore man was created in Christ.

Man, in himself, in his outward nature, was but an empty vessel, till the Christ of God became his fulness and perfection. His outward form was from the dust of the earth, but his inward spirit was the breath of the *Most High*. The image of God, even Christ himself, was his first, his sole righteousness and perfection; the infallible instructor, and enlightener of his understanding; the unerring guide, and director of his will. The name by which the Son of God was known to him, was, "The Lord his righteousness."

Angels themselves know no other righteousness, than the righteousness of God *in Christ*.

The fall of man, or "original sin," (as our Church Article with great truth expresses it) "is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil." We have already seen what this original righteousness was, which man possessed in a state of innocence, viz. that it was *Christ*, "the Lord his righteousness," in him. This is what Adam lost—this is what Christ alone can restore. Man in his present fallen state, without Christ, must be naturally inclined to evil; he has no righteousness of his own. And he can no more be saved by any exertion of his own natural powers, than he can see by the utmost stretch of his organs of sight, without the intervention of light.

Here, then, a serious and inquiring mind may be ready to ask—how is this great Redeemer to become my righteousness? I feel the force of the Scripture truths you have mentioned, and experience in my soul the dreadful consequences of an original apostacy. But I know not whether Christ is my righteousness, or not. I know not whether I have the faintest traces of his image in my soul. But, my brethren, may it not be said with propriety to each of us, "Hath Christ, then, been so long time with thee, and yet hast thou not known him?" Every little rebuke of conscience; every emotion of kindness, tenderness and love; every sympathetic feeling of the prosperity or distress of thy neighbour; every sensibility of admiration, esteem and joy, from contemplating a truly wise and virtuous character; every fervent desire of imitating, what is good and excellent in others; every weak aspiration after holiness and perfection; nay, every little feeling of the restless cravings of thine own nature; every little longing after happiness unpossessed; all, all is Christ, speaking

within thee, and waiting and watching to reveal himself in righteousness to thy soul. Nothing, therefore, is wanting, on our part, but a calm and quiet resignation of ourselves, and all that is within us, to his sovereign disposal, to redeem, purify and restore; to do every thing that is necessary to be done, and which he alone can do, for our salvation.

These practical influences and operations of the Spirit of Christ upon the Christian soul, will be the natural consequences of her embracing with sincerity the great doctrine of the Gospel, of human justification by free grace through Christ. An humble submission to this fundamental truth, will soon convince her that the *Lord* is not only *called*, but *is, indeed*, her only *righteousness*; or, as the Apostle speaks, that Christ is “of God made *unto* her wisdom, *righteousness*, *sanctification* and *redemption*. It is not my intention to discuss the evidence of this all-important tenet, and to prove to you how essentially it is connected with the supremacy of God, the sanctity of his law, the weakness and guilt of man, and the whole economy of the Gospel, and how explicitly it is revealed and inculcated in the Scriptures. A discussion of this nature would exceed the ordinary limits of several pulpit discourses, and is a subject fitter for the closet, than for public instruction. In our Church it is, and always has been, an express article of her belief, and condition of her communion; and she has ever considered the preaching of the Gospel, as St. Paul did, the preaching of “the unsearchable riches” of Christ. And, indeed, with good reason; for in him every prophecy, precept, promise, and truth is centered. His character and work as a Saviour is held forth in a variety of lights in the sacred oracles, and in every opening and view that is given us (if I may so speak) of the dispensations of divine providence and grace, he is the chief figure, or the termination of the prospect. If, therefore, we would know what esteem is due to our Redeemer in our hearts, and how high a place he ought to hold in our views of religion, let us consider

him as the source and cause of our acceptance with God, and observe the regard paid to him, as such, by the sacred writers. They derive almost all their motives to every moral duty, from what he has done, and is still doing for us, and seem to delight even in the repetition of his name; so that those who are accustomed to the devout and serious perusal of the word of God, will not, I am persuaded, reckon it enthusiasm to assert, that these writers appear to be warmed and elevated above their ordinary animation, when they celebrate his salvation; and that both in the Old and New Testament, wherever we meet with any passage singularly lofty and sublime, there we may be sure that Christ the Redeemer is the immediate theme.

This doctrine of justification by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, was the doctrine taught among Christians, in the earliest and purest ages of the Church. And their departure from it was the prelude to that universal corruption of faith and worship, that relaxation of discipline, and dissolution of morals, which took place in the ages following. It is also very remarkable, that this doctrine was always fully and distinctly taught in those Churches, which never submitted to the tyranny, or received the corruptions of the papal usurpation. I mean the Churches of the vallies in Piedmont, and those composed of the Albigenses and Waldenses in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The accounts which have been transmitted to us of their principles, long before the Reformation, plainly show, that they maintained this doctrine from the beginning. And as it is well known, that the Reformation took its rise from the gross and scandalous application of the doctrine of merit in indulgences, so all the reformers, without exception, were strenuous asserters of the grace of God. This was considered by them as the "article by which the Church must stand or fall." The first reformers of the English Church, constantly preached the same doctrine, and their eminent piety is a standing evi-

dence of its efficacy and force. How far our mode of preaching at the present day ought to agree with theirs, it becomes not me to determine. But what is most obvious in our situation, and what ought to affect all Christians with most concern, is the great prevalence of infidelity, or, at least, of religious apathy, among us. This is the more surprising, as there have never been wanting, nor are there at present wanting, many able and eminent writers to stand up in the defence of the Gospel, and refute the changeable, and inconsistent reasonings of infidels, in all their various forms and principles. But I am afraid the best defence of all is too much neglected; to wit, the zealous and assiduous inculcating of the great and fundamental truths of religion, namely, the lost and condemned state of man, by nature, and the necessity of pardon through the righteousness, and of renovation by the Spirit, of Christ. This would make a far greater number of those, who call themselves by the name of Christ, Christians indeed. The visible efficacy of the doctrine would be a sensible demonstration of its truth and divine original. I do not pretend to say, my brethren, that these truths are called in question by the preachers of those Churches, which explicitly profess them, but I believe they are, by some, kept more out of view than formerly. The Unitarian and the Socinian expressly reject them. But I do not see how *these* can be esteemed Christians at all, and neither can a sincere and reflecting professor of religion adopt the sentiment so current in the world, "that it is a small matter what a man believes, if his life be good." He perceives the absurdity in supposing that a man may believe erroneously, and yet lead as virtuous a life, as he that believes right. He knows, moreover, from God's own word, that his people are "sanctified through the truth." "The master prejudice of the age," says Bishop Warburton, "is the innocence of error." The ministers of God are, therefore, bound to combat it, and they will not find it difficult to

prove that where error is unmolested,—where the special doctrines of revelation are seldom enforced, that preaching, like a barren, though comely tree, will be more distinguished by its blossoms, than by its fruits. For believe me, my brethren, it is chiefly by proclaiming and inculcating that stupendous truth, “the incarnation and crucifixion of the only begotten Son of God, and the message of mercy, delivered from the cross to repenting sinners”—“be ye reconciled unto God”—“believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved,”—it is only, I say, by insisting frequently on these important doctrines, that the new man is awakened from the fallacious estimate of happiness, and “renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.” “He is created *after* God, in *righteousness* and true holiness.” This cheering doctrine of the *Lord being our righteousness*, can alone support the drooping hopes of the awakened sinner. For when he fairly estimates the guilt of sin by the costly satisfaction which was required to atone for it, and the worth of his soul, by the price which was paid for its redemption, and contrasts both of these with his own sottish inconsideration; when he reflects on the amazing love and pity of Christ, and on the cold and formal acknowledgments, with which he has hitherto returned this infinite obligation, making light of the precious blood of the Son of God, and trifling with the gracious invitations of his Redeemer; surely, if he be not lost to sensibility, mixed emotions of guilt, and fear, and shame, and remorse, and sorrow, will nearly overwhelm his soul; he will smite his breast, and cry out, in the language of the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” But blessed be God, such an one need not despair. Rich and confident in the righteousness of the Redeemer, he casts himself boldly on his undeserved mercy; surrenders himself into his hands, and resolves solemnly, through his grace, to dedicate henceforth all his faculties and powers to his service, as some faint return for such unspeakable love. It is

from neglecting to appreciate the mighty favour conferred on them by Christ, in deigning to permit them to plead *His* righteousness instead of their own, with his offended Father, that the notion of Christian practice among the bulk of nominal Christians, is so generally servile, base, and mercenary. They give no more than they *dare* not withhold ; they abstain from nothing but what they *must* not practice. In short, they know Christianity only as a system of restraints. She becomes despoiled of every liberal and generous principle. She is rendered almost unfit for the social intercourses of life, and is only suited to the gloomy walls of that cloister, in which they would confine her. But *true Christians* consider themselves not as satisfying some rigorous creditor, but as discharging a debt of gratitude. Theirs is accordingly not the stinted return of a constrained obedience, but the large and liberal measure of a voluntary service. The doctrine, therefore, of the text, that the “Lord is our righteousness,” instead of inspiring its advocates with presumption or apathy, effectually guards them against both ; the deepest humility must surely spring from the consideration, that such is the guilt and depravity of man, that nothing but the righteousness of a divine person, can atone for it ; and under this persuasion, what can so effectually stimulate his exertions to the attainments of a virtuous and religious life, as a zeal for *His* service and glory who has done and suffered so much to give these exertions efficacy and value. This principle, therefore, it is, which animates the true Christian in all the practical duties of life. With respect to himself, it renders him cautious, circumspect, and diffident. With respect to others, benevolent and useful. He who deigns to be his righteousness, becomes the pattern of his outward conduct, and in his retired and happier hours, this principle it is that inspires his devotion, and causes him to delight in the worship of God, that fills him with consolation, and peace, and

gladness, and sometimes even enables him “to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

For, (to speak in the nervous, though somewhat antiquated language of the judicious Hooker,) it must indeed prove a subject of ineffable consolation to every person conscious of imperfection and guilt, that “the righteousness, wherein we must be found, if we will be justified, is not our own, therefore we cannot be justified by any inherent quality. Christ has merited righteousness for as many as are found in him. In him God findeth us, if we be faithful; for by faith we are incorporated into Christ. Then,” (continues he) “although in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous; yet even the man who is impious in himself, full of iniquity, full of sin; *him* being found in Christ through faith, and having his sin remitted through repentance; *him* God upholdeth with a gracious eye; putteth away his sin by not imputing it; taketh quite away the punishment due thereunto by pardoning it; and accepteth him in Christ Jesus as perfectly righteous, as if he had fulfilled all that was commanded him in the law. Shall I say *more perfectly righteous*, than if himself had fulfilled the whole law? I must take heed what *I* say; but the Apostle saith, God made *him* to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Let it “be counted folly, or frenzy, or fury, whatsoever. It is our comfort and our wisdom: we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned, and God hath suffered; that God hath made himself the Son of man, and that men are made the righteousness of God.” To this commentary upon the text, pronounced by one of the greatest lights of our Church, I shall not presume to add a single observation.

Wherefore, to conclude, let them who with penitent hearts have humbled themselves before the cross of Christ, and who plead his righteousness and death as their only ground of pardon and acceptance with God, resolve hence-

forth, through the help of his Spirit, to bring forth the fruits of this *righteousness*. Let them, who would indeed be Christians, watch over their ways and over their hearts with unceasing circumspection, and above all things, maintain that sobriety of spirit and tenderness of conscience, which are eminently characteristic of the true Christian. It is by this unceasing diligence, as the Apostle declares, that the servants of Christ must make their calling sure. Their labour will not be thrown away ; for an “ inheritance shall,” at length, “ be ministered unto them abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” To whom, with the Father, and Holy Ghost, &c. &c. &c.

SERMON VIII.

CHRISTIANITY THE WISDOM OF GOD.

“WE SPEAK WISDOM TO THOSE WHICH ARE PERFECT.”—1 Cor. ii. 6.

It appears from a view of the context, and the general drift of the Apostle's discourse in this place, that his meaning is, that however the more simple and obvious doctrines of Christianity, expounded in the plain and easy manner which he had adopted, might appear to ignorant and carnal men as foolish and unreasonable ; yet the whole doctrine fully disclosed unto *perfect men*, that is, to men of sound understandings and upright hearts, would appear in the light of exalted wisdom, calculated to effect the most glorious and important purposes, the honouring of God, and the salvation of man. Such, I conceive, to be the meaning of the Apostle in this place, which, by God's assistance, I shall endeavour to enforce in the following discourse.—For this purpose, I shall briefly lay before you some peculiar excellencies and perfections of our holy religion, which may serve to evince its wisdom and its truth, to establish its claim to an heavenly origin, and to show that it really is what St. Paul calls it, *the wisdom of God*, proceeding entirely from the God of truth and wisdom. The subject, indeed, is common ; but the best subjects should always *be* so, and none, surely, can be better accommodated to the times in which we live, when infidelity, with giant steps, is progressing so rapidly over the civilized world. I beg

leave, therefore, to lay before you, without further preface, the ideas which naturally arise from the consideration of this subject.

The first excellence peculiar to the Christian religion, I observe to be *this*; that it communicates a true and accurate notion of the Deity, as far as the human mind is capable of comprehending this infinite Being. It unfolds his nature agreeably to the dictates of reason, the works of the creation, the traditions of antiquity, and the experience of mankind. It displays a character calculated to excite in the human heart the tenderest love, the most profound veneration, and the most willing obedience. It ascribes to him every conceivable perfection; it establishes all his prerogatives; it justifies all his proceedings. With respect to his essence, it represents him One, Eternal, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Independent, Impassible, and Immutable. With respect to his essential disposition of will, most free and absolute, most good and benign, most holy and just, most true and constant. It acknowledges Him the maker and upholder of all beings, both material and immaterial, visible and invisible; it attributes to Him supreme majesty and authority over all; it informs us, that He framed this visible world, with a special view to the use and benefit of man; that he preserves it for the same gracious purpose; that he governs us with a peculiar care and providence, viewing all the thoughts of men, and ordering all their actions, either to individual or to general good. In his dealings with his rational creatures, it declares him to be tender and solicitous for their good; exceedingly beneficent and merciful towards them; compassionating their evils, and ever disposed to accept of their repentance, while, at the same time, he is represented as impartially just, and implacably severe to all the obstinate workers of iniquity. In a word, most terrible in his justice, but most glorious and venerable in

all the ways of his Providence. Unlike the best systems of the wisest philosophers, our religion suggests no idea of the Deity unbecoming either his holiness, or his sanctity, but opens to us a prospect of both his nature and his government, which the most enlightened created reason could have never presented. What depth of penetration, for instance, what limited sagacity could have ever conjectured, that God should send down out of his own bosom his eternal Son, to assume our nature, and appear in our flesh, in order to communicate more effectually to man his holy will, and merciful intentions; to set before us an exact pattern of a virtuous life, and by his obedience and death to expiate the offences of our race, and procure our reconciliation with the offended Deity. Here is a mysterious depth of wisdom which no created mind can possibly fathom, and which can only be an object of reverential silence. The astonishing display, however, which it exhibits of boundless mercy, and infinite justice, recommends it no less to our understanding than to our affections. Well might Job and the Psalmist exclaim, when meditating on this subject, “What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him, and that thou shouldest set thy heart upon him? Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him, or the son of man, that thou makest such account of him?”*

Now, thus to instil into the minds of men accurate and becoming notions of God, must surely be a great excellence of any religious system, for besides that a true knowledge of God, considered barely as the result of the most noble contemplation of which our faculties are capable, is in itself every way most desirable; and error, in this subject, for the same reason, most deplorable; such knowledge, moreover, and such error are of great importance, as powerfully influencing the actions of men. For their practice, both moral and religious, are generally regulated by their con-

* Psalm cxliv. 3.

ceptions respecting God. Worthy and acceptable service, or such as is otherwise, is, commonly speaking, the consequence of accurate, or erroneous opinions, on this point. God is either worshipped in *spirit and in truth*, or Jehovah is degraded into some contemptible idol. All men must admit that the example of God is a perfect rule of action, and that they are bound, of course, to resemble and imitate him, so that their dispositions and conduct will, for the most part, be copies of the image which they have formed to themselves of the Supreme Being. How divine then, and excellent that religion, which exhibits this glorious image in all its purity, brightness and perfection !

A *second* great excellency peculiar to the Christian institution, is this, that it faithfully communicates to us all necessary information respecting ourselves, our nature, our origin, and our end ; points upon which neither reason, nor history, nor experience could have satisfied us. It teaches us, that we consist of a frail and mortal body, taken from the earth and fashioned by the hand of God himself ; and of an immortal spirit derived from heaven, and breathed out of the mouth of the Eternal ; so that we are immediately made acquainted with the dignity of our nature, the nobleness of our descent, and our near alliance to the Eternal himself. And thus the ground of all our duties, and the sanction of all our obligations are clearly placed before our eyes, and we are fully convinced, that every circumstance of our creation was calculated to enforce and facilitate our voluntary obedience ; but we are taught that these gracious purposes were defeated by our wilful transgression, and that we fell accordingly into a wretched state of inward blindness, error, and disorder, and of outward frailty, sorrow, and trouble. It acquaints us further, that while thus estranged from God, and exposed to all the consequences of his displeasure, we were again, by his exceedingly great mercy, and free grace, placed in a capacity of rising from our fall, and of being reinstated in a condition, more happy even than that which

we had forfeited. It opens to our eyes the prospect of another world, and tells us plainly what will be our lot after death, and upon what conditions our happiness may be secured. This indeed is the only doctrine which fully resolves the mighty question, which has ever perplexed the wisest and most thoughtful mortals, viz. "in what consists the final happiness of man, and by what means it may be obtained." This it does, in the most convincing manner, by making us acquainted with the origin of human depravity, with the methods adopted by the Almighty to redress it, and with the conditions upon which we may certainly enjoy the covenanted mercies of our Creator.

Another peculiar excellency of our religion is, that it lays down an accurate rule of life most agreeable to our reason, fully accommodated to our nature, and highly conducive to our individual welfare, and to the promotion of social happiness in general. By a compliance with this rule, we exalt our nature as high as it can rise ; we insure the favour of our Maker ; we advance the interests of our fellow creatures ; we purchase all the conveniences of a virtuous life, and all the comforts of an approving conscience. For, in fact, what can be more just, or becoming, or pleasant, or beneficial, than those duties of piety which our religion enjoins ? What can be more rational and proper, than that we highly esteem and honour what is most amiable and beneficent, and dread what is most powerful, just, and holy ? That we should be grateful to infinite bounty, trust in infinite goodness, and lay our wants before boundless generosity ? Can any thing be conceived more equitable, than to endeavour constantly to promote *his* glory, who is ever showering down his blessings upon *us* ?

Let us consider, in the next place, those precepts of our religion which regulate our conduct towards our fellow-creatures, and we shall soon be convinced that none can be more excellent and beneficial. "The Christian religion," says an honest pagan historian, "inculcates nothing but

what is mild and equitable ;” and, so far, he is correct in his idea of it ; but, it enjoins us, moreover, sincerely and tenderly to love one another, to sympathize in all the misfortunes and sorrows of our brethren, to yield them comfort and assistance, by parting with some portion of our property, some part of our ease and pleasure. It limits not our charity to any description of fellow-mortals ; but, in conformity to the boundless goodness of our heavenly Father, extends it to all. It requires us to bear each others’ burthens ; to support each others’ infirmities ; mildly to resent, and freely to forgive the injuries that may be offered us ; to retain no malice in our hearts ; to execute no revenge, but to render good for evil. It charges us to be quiet and orderly in our several stations, diligent in our callings, candid in our words, upright in our dealings, faithful to our promises, obedient and respectful towards our superiors, meek and gentle to our inferiors, cautious in our censures, innocent and ingenuous in our conversation, and courteous to all men. It engages us to prefer the public good, to any private convenience, to our opinions, or capacities, to our credit, or fame, or profit, or pleasure ; rather to renounce a less good ourselves, than to deprive others of a greater. Now who can number, or fully appreciate the blessings that flow from the practice of these duties, either to the person that observes them, or to human society at large ? O divine charity ! what tongue can worthily describe thy heavenly beauty, thy incomprehensible sweetness, clemency, and benevolence ? How nobly dost thou enlarge our minds beyond the narrow sphere of individual selfishness, into an universal solicitude and interest, combining all the concerns of fellow mortals with our own ? How dost thou enlarge the field of our enjoyments ; enrich us with the wealth, decorate us with the honours, adorn us with the wisdom, and gladden us with the prosperity of the world, while teaching us to rejoice with those who rejoice, and thus to bring all the blessings of others home to ourselves ! How dost thou raise a man

above the reach of adversity and disaster, of grief and trouble, as nothing is able to discompose the mind in which thou residest and reignest without control! He triumphs over his outward enemies and inward depravities, as *He* can experience no troublesome hostility, who will be a friend to all, and submits to all occurrences with thy heavenly Spirit. O, what numberless sorrows and apprehensions, solitudes and suspicions, cares and distractions of mind *at home*, what misery and tragedies might be prevented *abroad*, would mortals only hearken to Thy mild suggestions! What a paradise would this world become, would it only enthrone Thee as its absolute sovereign! How excellent, then, that doctrine which brought Thee down from heaven, and to those who embrace Thee, the peace and joy of heaven, along with Thee!

As to the laws and directions which our religion prescribes, concerning the particular management of our souls and bodies, together with their respective functions and enjoyments, they also will be found most agreeable to reason, and conducive to human happiness. They secure the spiritual portion of our nature against the usurpations and dominion of matter, and thus maintain that inward subordination so necessary to individual peace and contentment. They enjoin us to think soberly and moderately of ourselves, as beings convinced of their natural weakness, and dependence upon God,—conscious of sinful inclinations, and of actual guilt. They direct us to labour for a calm, serene, and cheerful frame of mind; that we be not easily discomposed by anger, or distracted with care, or borne down with sorrow, or disturbed by accidents,—but that, on all occasions, we habituate ourselves to look up to God as the controller of all events, and the arbiter of all our destinies. They command us to restrain our appetites, to moderate our enjoyments, to abstain from all irregular and prohibited indulgences, such as may vitiate our minds, or impair our health, or dissipate our estate, or stain our repu-

tation, or prejudice our repose. Our religion requires us, moreover, occasionally to withdraw our minds from the hurry and anxiety of worldly concerns, from the fading glories, the unstable possessions, the vanishing delights of this transitory state, and to fix them upon objects more worthy of their immortal nature. Objects elevated and heavenly, pure and spiritual, infinitely stable, and permanent. It tells us, “not to love the world, and the things therein; to be solicitous about nothing;”—but to cast all our care upon God’s providence. “Not to labour for the meat that perishes; not to trust in uncertain riches;”—but to have our treasure, our heart, our hope, and our conversation in heaven. In a word, “Whatever things are true, whatever things are just, whatever things are honest, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, or any praise,—that we should mind such things,”* and practise them. Such, and so exceedingly excellent, is the rule of Christian practice, surpassing in perfection, beauty, and efficacy, every system hitherto communicated to man. Infinitely more productive of complete, lovely, and active goodness, than either the *righteousness* of the *Pharisees*, or all the wisdom of the most virtuous philosophers. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself,” is a precept of such richness and latitude, that it fills a well disposed mind with more information and delight than the *ethics* of Aristotle, the *offices* of Cicero, the *precepts* of Epictetus, or all the other volumes of philosophical morality.

Our religion does not only acquaint us truly and fully with our duty; but, (what is its peculiar excellency,) builds it upon most solid foundations, urges it by the most cogent motives, derives it from the best principles, and directs it to the noblest ends. This is the only philosophy

* Phil. iv. 8.

that enjoins the practice of virtue, not only as agreeable to man's imperfect and fallible reason, but chiefly as conformable to the perfect goodness of God,—as the dictate of his infallible wisdom,—as the resolution of his most holy will,—as enjoined by his unquestionable authority,—as our indispensable duty, and the only way to happiness. The principles from which it wills us to act, are love, reverence, and gratitude to God, hearty good will towards men, and a sober regard to our own true welfare, and the ends which it prescribes are God's honour, public edification, and the salvation of our souls. It excites us to godliness by a laudable ambition of thus resembling Supreme Goodness itself, by enforcing the obligation of gratitude to Infinite Beneficence, by teaching us hereby to avoid the wrath and displeasure of God; to obtain his favour, and secure his blessing; to escape the regrets and terrors of conscience, while we live, and endless misery when we die; to procure present comfort, and ensure a future crown of glory, and bliss for ever more. These, surely, are the truest and firmest grounds upon which a right estimation of virtue can subsist. These the most effectual motives for embracing it. These are the purest fountains, from which it can issue. These the noblest marks at which it can aim. A virtue thus founded, and thus reared, must certainly be most sound and genuine, firm and stable, substantial and beneficial.

Another important and peculiar advantage of our religion, is, that in delivering so excellent and perfect a rule of life, it communicates it pure and undefiled, debased by no alloy, and clogged by no incumbrance. It requires of us such service only as is rational and spiritual; such as consists in substantial duties, plainly necessary, or highly advantageous. It diverts us not from the practice of solid piety and virtue, to the tedious observance of many external rites. It spends not the vigour of our minds upon superficial formalities, which serve only to amuse the fancies of children, or to depress the spirits of slaves. The ritual

observances which it enjoins are few and simple, and easy to be performed, evidently reasonable, decent, and useful, calculated to instruct us, and to excite us to the practice of the most salutary duties. Such as may prove *milk to babes*, and “wisdom to those which are perfect.”

As to the general interests of mankind, in their social and national capacities, our holy religion is no less calculated to promote them, than it is to advance the improvement and happiness of individuals. Good order, subordination, tranquillity, justice, and mercy, are the legitimate and lovely children of true religion; and no mistake is more unfortunate, no calumny more unjust, than to imagine or assert, that the religion of Christ is hostile to the common rights of human nature. Has, in fact, any system of polity ever existed among men, which honoured the poorest and lowest ranks in society as they are honoured by the Christian religion? In the kingdom of Christ, which is the Church, man is respected as man, exclusively of all regard to the external circumstances of rank, riches, honours, or station. All human beings in this truly free community, are considered as one family, the offspring of one parent, and all cherished with maternal affection. Every thinking man, were he even an heathen philosopher, or a mere philanthropist, should love the religion of Christ, for its beneficent effects upon the human race. It is the guide of youth, the support of age, the repose of the weary, and the refuge of the miserable. It arrests the hand of the oppressor by appalling his conscience, or if unfortunately the oppressor should prevail, it teaches the oppressed to look with confidence to a Deliverer “mighty to save.” It humbles pride, and controls avarice, by showing the littleness of all earthly grandeur, the comparative insufficiency of riches, and by founding the true dignity of human nature on the gifts of divine grace. This dignity is best promoted and preserved by the religion which teaches that God vouchsafes to communicate his own Spirit to man; and in proportion as man

learns to value himself with a rational esteem for benefits conferred on him by his Creator, he will be more reluctant to submit to such degradation as vilifies his nature.

That the Christian religion may be abused by the votaries of despotism to the purposes of depressing the people, must be confessed; because history proves that it has been so abused. But the religion thus abused is the *Christian* religion in name only. For, of genuine Christianity it is the nature and the spirit to control and subdue all the mischievous propensities of men,—to eradicate passions which civil laws cannot reach,—and thus to promote more powerfully the liberty, and all the rights of man, in a well regulated community, than any human institutions can do. “Show me a nation truly Christian, and I will not hesitate to show you a nation truly free.” In one word, no philosophy,—no religion,—no code of laws,—no form of government in the world, has tended so much to establish the rational equality of man, as Christianity.

The last advantage which I shall mention of our religion, and which belongs to no others, is this, that it not only clearly teaches, and powerfully enforces a virtuous line of conduct; but provides, moreover, sufficient help and ability to practise it. Without such a provision to our frail and sinful nature, no instruction, or exhortation, or encouragement, would be available. For want of this, other laws, in fact, are only “mysteries of condemnation,”*—racks of conscience,—parents of guilt, and of regret,—reading hard lessons, without assisting us to learn them,—imposing heavy burthens, without enabling us to bear them. Not so the law of Jesus Christ. This is no *dead letter*; but is ever accompanied with a “*quickening Spirit*.” It not only sounds in the ear, but stamps itself upon the heart that sincerely embraces it. It carries with

* 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9.

it a sure guide to all godliness,—a safe-guard from all evil. If our minds be dark, or doubtful, it directs us to a faithful oracle, ready to communicate all necessary information. If our passions be unruly, our appetites outrageous;—if temptations be violent and threaten to bear us down, we may have recourse to the armory of heaven, and put on the whole armour of God to withstand and subdue them. If our condition appear disconsolate, or desperate, it sends us to the cross of Christ, where we shall not fail to find refreshment and relief; where we find a *full* atonement made for our sins, if by faith we embrace it. To them who sincerely *ask it*, God has promised in his Gospel to *grant* his *Holy Spirit*,—to guide them in all their ways,—to remind them of their duty,—to strengthen them in obedience,—to guard them from surprises,—to support and cheer them in all their afflictions. Here is the transcendant and peculiar privilege and advantage of our holy religion. It enables a creature so ignorant, so weak, so inconstant as man, so easily deluded by false appearances,—a reed, so easily shaken by the summer breeze, not only to perceive what is right, but to pursue his steady course through the most intricate and dangerous paths of this world. Without this friendly, vigilant, and powerful guide and guardian, the frequent experience of our weakness would utterly dishearten and cast us into despair, either of holding fast our integrity, or recovering from our disorders. It is the comfortable consideration, that religion is the power of God unto salvation, which alone can nourish our hopes, can excite our courage, can quicken and support our religious exertions, by assuring us, that although we feel ourselves “able to do nothing of ourselves,” yet “we can do all things by Christ that strengthens us.”*

* Phil. iv. 13.

These few considerations, I trust, are sufficient, my brethren, to vindicate the everlasting Gospel from the aspersions of the inconsiderate and the profane; to confirm your esteem and love for it; and to stimulate you to imbibe its spirit and obey its injunctions. And now "the grace of God who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, make you perfect; stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."* Amen.

* 1 Pet. iv. 10.

S E R M O N I X.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

LET A MAN SO ACCOUNT OF US, AS OF THE MINISTERS OF CHRIST, AND STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD. MOREOVER, IT IS REQUIRED IN STEWARDS, THAT A MAN BE FOUND FAITHFUL.—1 *Cor.* iv. 1.

THE reciprocal duties which belong to the clergy, as “ministers of Christ,” and stewards of the mysteries of God,” and to the congregations, whom divine Providence has committed to their charge, are of such primary importance to the well-being of every religious society, and to the general promotion of Christian holiness among men, that occasions, like the present, are embraced with great propriety, for recommending them to the serious consideration of all our hearers. And although the subject has been so frequently and so ably discussed, that it can offer few or no charms of novelty, yet the want of these, perhaps, will be usefully supplied, by calling up such sentiments as are naturally connected with the service of the day.* Besides this solemn ordination of ministers in the Church being of divine appointment, and therefore an essential point of ancient discipline, seems on this account also, to claim our attention to those spiritual relations between the clergy and laity, which arise from this, and which are contained very explicitly in the words of the text—“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards,

[* The ordination of a presbyter.]

that a man be found faithful." That is, in other words, let all Christians esteem and treat us, not merely as their ministers, or servants, but as the ministers of Christ, and as such, let us be found faithful.

The Apostle says, "let a man so account of *us* ; not only of *me*, *Paul*, but of all the ministers of Christ," to whom he has promised his Spirit to the end of the world ; for we are "stewards of the mysteries of God," and in this supposition, we know what our Lord himself declares, "He that despises you, despises me, and God that sent me." But on the other hand, also, he clearly informs us, that the honourable character of *ministers* of Christ, and *stewards* of God, is by no means exempt from many restrictions and pressing obligations ; for, says he, "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." *Faithful* to his calling,—*faithful* to the solemn engagements into which he enters at his ordination,—*faithful* to the mysteries which, in some degree, are committed to his keeping,—*faithful* to the Lord, whose servant he is,—and *faithful* to the flock, over whom he is appointed. Thus, in these few words, of *being found faithful*, the Apostle comprehends the whole body of duty incumbent upon the clergy ; and on this their fidelity in the several branches of their high calling, he grounds the obligations of esteeming and loving them for *their work's sake*.

To take a general view of the relations subsisting between the ministers of the Gospel and their congregations, is all that can be done in a short discourse. It would be, moreover, presumptuous in me, and, perhaps, irksome to you, were I to enter into those details of duty, which he whom I am principally addressing, has made the study of his life, and the subject of his devotions. It shall, therefore, be my endeavour at present, merely to sketch the outline of our sacred profession, leaving it to my reverend friend, and others of my clerical brethren, to fill up the picture with such lovely and interesting features as may conciliate the esteem and affections of all, with whom divine Provi-

dence may connect them, and I will conclude by offering a few considerations which may induce both clergy and laity to promote the glorious and important interests for which the Christian ministry was instituted in the Church.

The primary object of the Gospel ministry is, "to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." In other words, to enlighten their understandings with the truths, and to reform their hearts, by the influences of religion. For this important purpose are they appointed to be the *ministers of Christ*, and the *stewards of God's* mysteries. In the *first* of these capacities they must execute the commission of their divine Master, by *teaching whatsoever he has commanded them*; in the *second*, they must *faithfully* apply those means in his name, which he has appointed for the reformation of the world. Let us dwell briefly on these two ideas, which seem to embrace the whole duty of a Christian minister. It is his profession "to turn men from darkness to light," and this he can do in no other manner, than by declaring, in quality of a minister, or *ambassador* of Christ, and in *his* name, the whole counsel of God. Without the intervention of such imperfect and feeble instruments, as the very best of mortals unquestionably are, God could have poured out his Spirit upon all flesh with such miraculous efficacy, as to flash conviction upon every understanding, and stamp the character of holiness upon every heart; but, in so doing, he would have departed from the ordinary course of his providence, and adopted a dispensation little suitable to man's present state of discipline and trial. He has chosen, therefore, a system for training his rational creatures to the knowledge of truth, and the practice of holiness, which, while it lays no restraint upon their wills or affections, applies the most powerful motives to actuate both, and sets all the moral, all the religious faculties of mankind in motion, by the common methods of instruction and persuasion, sanctioned by his authority, and sanctified by his blessing.

The saying, in which all men are principally interested, and which ought, therefore, “of all men,” eagerly “to be received,” is, “that Jesus Christ came into the world to *save sinners*.” But surely in vain did he come, unless, in the ordinary course of Providence, the *knowledge* of this salvation, and the means of obtaining it, be conveyed to those whom it concerns. This knowledge is not born with us, nor are we to expect it by inspiration from above. Heaven has revealed it once, but left it from henceforth to be communicated by man to man. He whose lamp has been lighted, is enjoined to light those of his fellow-creatures, that so the Gospel may be continued and glorified, to the end of time. Every man is the offspring of sinful progenitors. The branch of a sinful stock, he is ushered at his birth, into a state of being, degenerate, depraved and fallen; and, therefore, no sooner do any of his faculties begin to unfold themselves, than they find objects on every side soliciting their misapplication and abuse. In a state of nature thus immoral and corrupted, and a slave to all the irascible, all the pleasurable sensations of the soul, exposed continually to the influence of evil example, and a constant spectator of the fascinating indulgence of guilty passions, how can man fulfil his original destinies as a moral and accountable creature; how can he be qualified for the enjoyment of that supreme and eternal happiness, which is conferred exclusively upon purity of heart and holiness of life? My brethren, it must be evident to you all, that this can be done only by some superior power counteracting the influences of human depravity, and giving a direction to men’s propensities and affections, very different from that which they derive, either from the light, or the sentiments of nature. This power, as acting upon our souls, or *spirits*, must be *spiritual*; as enabling us to correct the vices of our *nature*, it must be *supernatural*. It is, in fact, the sacred and omnipotent influence of God’s Holy Spirit himself; that Spirit which effectuates in fallen man a new moral creation,

causing him to be born again, translating him from the darkness of this, into the marvellous light of *another* world, and pouring into his soul all those precious and transmuting graces, by which the Scripture tells us he passes from a son of Adam into a child of God. Here is the true and only efficient cause of human sanctification, and of man's restoration to his original privileges, and the friendship of his Creator. But the heavenly agency of this blessed Spirit, purchased by the blood of the Great Redeemer, for man, is nevertheless applied to his necessities, conformably to his nature. "The eye of his understanding," as the Apostle speaks,* "must be enlightened," and this, in the common course of Providence, can be done only by instruction. The light of *reason*, on subjects of religion, are words without meaning. As well might we say the *light of the eye*. Reason is no more than the organ, which receives instruction, as the eye admits the light of heaven. As well may a man take a view of things upon earth, in a dark night, by the light of his own eye, as discover the things of heaven, during the night of nature, by the light of his own reason. Let us then be assured, that to talk of natural religion, is to abuse the obvious meaning of words, and let us convince ourselves, that from Adam to this day, there never was, or could be, a man left to himself, to make a religion of nature. The conviction of this important truth will induce you to account highly of the *ministers of Christ*, and *stewards of God's mysteries*, thus rendered instrumental in propagating the divine truths of religion, and will powerfully urge *them* to be *found faithful* in this glorious employment. When once mankind can be brought to acknowledge that saving wisdom is exclusively from above, and that the Gospel preached and read, and the sacraments administered in the Church, are the ordinary means appointed to obtain it, by the power of the Spirit that goes with them as channels

* Eph. i. 18.

into the heart of every believer,—then, and *not till then*, will the importance of a standing Christian ministry be evident, together with the advantages of that delightful connexion so eminently calculated to preserve “the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” and in righteousness of life. Now nothing can be more certain, from the Scriptures, than that the outward *ministry of the word* applied to the consciences of men, is the ordinary method, which Providence adopts and sanctifies for the reformation of the world. The Apostle tells us, accordingly, that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” but, “how shall they hear, without ■ preacher, and how shall they preach, except they be sent.”* The belief, therefore, of a Christian, is connected with the *preached word* of God, and the preaching of *this word* with the mission of the preacher. This mission, to be entitled to the promises of Christ, must be the same with that conferred upon his Apostles, when he spake unto them saying,† “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you alway unto the end of the world.” In these plain words runs the commission of Christ’s ministers; here are the credentials of every steward of God’s mysteries; these the magnificent promises entailed upon the execution of their office, upon their receiving persons of all nations into Church membership by baptism, and teaching them to observe all the commandments of their great Master—and while thus employed, he promises to be with them, and of course with their lawful successors, till the end of the world.

And now, my brethren, you clearly perceive that religious instruction being, as I observed above, indispensably necessary for religious information, it was perfectly consonant with the wisdom and goodness of the divine Saviour

* Rom. x.

† Matt. xxviii.

of mankind, that he should constitute *this* the principal duty of his ministers. They are to instruct all nations in the truths and ordinances—they are to inculcate upon all nations the obligations and sanctions of religion. This is their obvious and bounden duty, in which, as *stewards of God's mysteries*, they must be *found faithful*. With the Liturgy and Articles of the Church before their eyes, and after solemnly subscribing to her doctrines, it might appear presumption in me, or a trespass upon the patience of my reverend brother and clerical brethren, were I to detail that system of religious truths and discipline, which he is bound to maintain and inculcate. With his duty in this respect, I know he is too well acquainted to need any information from me, and I know also that he zealously performs it. But as the complexion of public opinion, even in matters of religion, is continually varying,—as religious errors, like comets seem to have their periodical returns, you will pardon me, if speaking upon this branch of our duty, I point out some subjects on which we should chiefly insist, at this day.

And in the first place, let us reflect that we live in an age which, if not really and solidly learned, displays, however, great pretensions to every kind of religious information. Books without number, upon every subject, are daily multiplying among us; and God be thanked, the holy Scriptures, and many religious treatises, form no inconsiderable part of the literary patronage of our country. Among all the classes of society, although few, perhaps, know much; yet all know something. This circumstance, while it calls aloud upon the clergy for unwearied application to theological attainments, requires, at the same time, a general acquaintance with all those collateral branches of science and literature, which may meet the refined taste of the times by throwing over religious discussion and solemn exhortation, the light of order,* and the charms of erudi-

[* "Lucidus ordo."—HORACE.]

tion. Amidst the general diffusion of miscellaneous knowledge, which seems at present to be brought home to every man's door, there is little occasion for a preacher to insist much upon any doctrines or duties, but such as are purely evangelical; and to show and to expose, upon Gospel principles, the various modes of self-deceit, by which men contrive to shake off their faith, elude their obligations, and live in contradiction to their profession, is become a very extensive province of the Christian ministry. The pleas and pretences of half-way Christians should be frequently collected, stated, and answered in a close and lively manner, till the hypocrite is completely unmasked, driven out of his strong holds, and obliged to surrender at discretion. The greatest of the modern preachers, as far as I am able to judge, such as Massillon and Bishop Horne, are admirable in this particular, and it makes the general plan of their sermons. In these there is nothing dry, nothing dull, nothing uninteresting. Every sentiment is clothed in the glowing imagery, the nervous energy, and the persuasive elocution of the Scriptures: no rigid, legal, and comfortless discourses on mere morality, are to be met with; but they first warm and animate the mind to the practice of holiness, by all the motives of faith, and the excitements of love. I said above, that doctrines and duties purely evangelical, should be the principal subjects of our public instruction. The knowledge of these is inexhaustible, like the eternal fountain of light, from whence it flows. On the infinite treasures of divine grace, and the transcendant mercies of redemption, when displayed in their native dignity and beauty, the religious mind can always dwell without the danger of satiety, and the fancy without the censure of extravagance. Let the vital principles of religion only be brought into operation, and no others will be wanted to reform the world, and, of course, to fulfil the designs of the Eternal in creating it.

The truth, as it is in Jesus, when admitted into the mind, and acting upon the heart, sets the whole spiritual system in motion, and carries it on to that final accomplishment of human happiness, to which the almighty Father originally ordained it. Let us then, my brethren, in these days of much wild discussion, much intellectual pride, when many are *tossed to and fro* with every wind of doctrine, consider this truth as a precious deposit committed to our charge. No care, no pains can be too great to preserve it to our people, and deliver it down to our successors in the ministry, pure and unadulterated. God and his Church expect and require that we fulfil this engagement, so solemnly formed, at our ordination, in presence of both. To this, I trust, we shall ever be found faithful—for the propagation and defence of true religion, as once delivered to the saints, and taught in our Articles, constitute our peculiar task, the prescribed employment of our time, the proper exercise of our powers and faculties. The study of the Scriptures, and ecclesiastical history, must ever be regarded among the primary duties of a clergyman, because *that* alone can prepare and qualify him for a discharge of all the rest.

Let us always remember as a spur to our exertions, that the Church of England, from the time of the Reformation to the present day, has ever been blessed with a learned clergy, who stood prepared to repel, with skill and vigour, all the assaults of her various assailants. From a repetition of these objections, we of this Church are not to expect an exemption, and therefore, without reading and thinking well upon the subject, we may be at a loss to refute them. "To contend earnestly for the faith," is a very positive apostolic injunction; and its propriety was never more obvious than at this time, and in this country. From authentic information, it appears to be evident that the same malignant star, which, for ages has shed its partial influence over the nations of Europe, sometimes exulting like

a giant to run its race; at *others*, suddenly setting in obscurity, has arisen above the eastern horizon of our land, attracted many worshippers, and seems hastening rapidly to its meridian altitude, thence to scatter strong delusion among its votaries. I allude to the alarming progress of Socinianism in some parts of New-England. Who shall say where the desolating torrent shall be arrested, meant, no doubt, by the great destroyer, to sweep the citadel of Christianity from among us. Our Church, indeed, has endeavoured to guard it with all the bulwarks which human skill can devise. She throws open to its defenders the whole armory of heaven, and bids them "put on the breastplate of righteousness, take the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Her constitution, her articles, her liturgy, are all strong towers in the day of trouble and attack. But to be rendered impregnable, great also must be the vigilance and unwearied the exertions, of the watchmen. The mystery of three persons in one divine nature and essence, and, of course, the divinity of Jesus Christ, is the main hinge upon which the whole system of his religion must turn. It is the Alpha and the Omega of all the doctrines of grace and redemption. It is the summary of that faith, for which we are commanded earnestly to contend. It is the rock of ages, upon which the Gospel is founded, and when once abandoned, leaves its other doctrines hardly worth contending for.

And truly, why may not the moral lessons of Socrates, the sublime speculations of Plato, the splendid maxims of Seneca, the refined casuistry of Cicero, and the rigid precepts of Epictetus, answer all the purposes for regulating the moral conduct of mankind, if once we deny the reality of a divine atonement, and propitiation for the sins of the whole world, the restoration of our guilty race, by the merits and death of a divine person, to the means of grace, and to the hope of glory, and the influences of a divine Spirit, to render these means effectual to our sanctification, and

to realize these hopes of a glorious immortality? Let us then contend earnestly for this vital principle of our holy religion; and without making its proofs the constant subject of our discourses, let us interweave it always into their texture, and endeavour to convince our hearers that Christianity without it is a lifeless system, or rather no system at all; holding out to man no placability in the Deity, no assurance of forgiveness, no path to holiness, no prospect of happiness. The absurdities of atheism have had their day, and I trust the hateful monster has nearly sunk under the enormities of its own destructive progeny. Deism, after retreating before the light of evidence, and abandoning most of its fortresses, ceases to show itself openly to the world, and is compelled to seek shelter under the mantle of Socinus. Priestly has passed under the strong hand of Bishop Horsley, and Paine of Bishop Watson, while Godwin, with all the numerous retailers of his mischievous follies, has been scouted from decent company, by the unknown author of "Pursuits of Literature."* But still, the great enemy of our race is ever at work to accomplish its destruction. By flattering the pride of human intellect, he effected his first conquest over man, and by the same means he will probably accomplish his last. It is our bounden duty, my brethren, as faithful and watchful shepherds, to observe all his approaches to our flocks under this fascinating guise, and to be ever prepared with antidotes against his insinuating poison. Let "Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," be the object of our faith, the seasoning of all our public instructions, and the delight of our hearts. "Jesus," says a pious ascetic,† "it is as honey in the mouth, melody in the ears, and healing to the heart of man." Wherefore, in this very critical state of things, let us be persuaded that the office of the priesthood is become more than ever an office of dignified

[* Now known to be Mr. Mathias.]

† St. Bernard.

importance. In the character of atoning Aaron, with incense in his hand, the priest is called upon to stand, as it were, between the dead and the living, and, if it may be, to stay the plague, the worst of plagues—that plague of religious and moral disorder, which has long deformed the face of civilized Europe, and I fear, is now beginning to scatter its infection among us. If, in *this*, as well as in all the other branches of our appropriate duty, we be found faithful *ministers of Christ*, and *stewards of God's mysteries*, there is no doubt, but our brethren of the laity will *account* of us accordingly, and esteem us highly for our work's sake. All the wise and religious among them are, no doubt, weighing seriously the period in which we live. They see the necessity of guarding, with increasing vigilance, every avenue to moral corruption. They behold the miseries of all civilized states multiplying in every form, and springing up from sources never yet conceived to exist. They perceive new fountains opening under our feet, and casting forth abundant waters of bitterness. They have lived to see the dreams of heated imaginations, and the meteors of modern philosophy, spreading over the world no mimic desolation; and their voluntary and liberal zeal and alacrity, to support an order of men, professing to teach and defend the good old systems of virtue and religion, is a sufficient evidence of their conviction, that when the strict and unbending principles of Christian morality become relaxed, or discountenanced among us, and the passions let loose from the restraints of revelation, the ruin of our country will inevitably follow that of so many others. The sentiment of every true son of the Church, I am persuaded, is *this*—"at such a period as the present, are we to rise, and watch, or be for ever fallen?"

Let us, therefore, furnish ourselves with all necessary arguments for combatting, as occasion may require, every objection to Christianity which perverted reason or prejudice may allege; but, at the same time, be convinced our-

selves, and striving to convince our flocks both in our public discourses and domestic intercourse, that the wisdom of the Gospel is chiefly addressed to the heart, and therefore is easily understood by all. It is in affecting that it enlightens us, in affecting that it persuades. Directed by the light of faith, the eye of the true Christian is intensely fixed on the great sphere of eternity. He knows and contemplates the rapid advances of that futurity, which is not measured by the succession of days and nights, or the revolution of years and ages. With these profound and magnificent impressions, no interests can possess or transport his heart but those to which he is invited from above. No, not a desire of his soul,—not a movement of his life,—no apprehended evil,—no idea of happiness, that does not in some degree refer to eternity. When once, my beloved hearers, these divine convictions, these sublime elements of faith, are suffered to have due influence upon a minister and his people,—and the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit has convinced a congregation, that the Supreme God is addressing them by the mouth of his appointed delegates, faithfully delivering to them the message of salvation: then, O then, would a little paradise spring up on earth, and flocks of such descriptions, however small at first, would entice many wanderers into their sacred and lovely enclosures! Then would a divine emulation be excited between the pastor and his charge, to aim at such excellence in their several departments, as might create a delightful hesitation in pronouncing, whether the saving lessons of the Gospel are delivered with more zeal and fidelity, or received and obeyed with greater relish and effect!

I trust, my brethren, that on the present occasion, we may, without incurring the censure of presumption, humbly indulge in these pleasing anticipations. In taking upon himself, at this time, the sacred character of a Presbyter in the Church of Christ, I have no doubt but the first desire of our reverend brother's heart for his flock is, that

they *should be saved*; and I trust a sincere intention to concur with his ministrations to this purpose, is cherished by all the members of this Church. Their past and present exertions, so liberal, so uncommon, are a sure pledge of their future zeal in the cause of the sanctuary. While discarding from their minds every feeling of bigotry, and cherishing for sister churches sincere esteem and affection, they still felt the want of their own peculiar institutions,—of the forms by which their forefathers had worshipped the Eternal. They felt the want, and they have supplied it,—supplied, in a manner that reflects the highest credit on their characters, which nothing can enhance but such a punctual and uniform line of Christian conduct, of genuine piety, and of strict conformity to the doctrines, discipline, and usages of our Church, as may exhibit all her works and comeliness to the world; and convince our fellow citizens, that she is indeed deserving of all our zeal to support her.

You will pardon me, my brethren, if, in concluding this discourse, I avail myself of this occasion to present you with one affecting exhortation, or reflection, to strengthen the predilections which have called forth your exertions in behalf of this church. Call to mind, my brethren, the days that are past,—the famous men of old,—the founders and fathers of our beloved Zion. “By them,” to use the words of the wise man, “the Lord through his power from the beginning has wrought great glory.”* “Men giving counsel by their understanding, and declaring prophecies. Wise and eloquent in their instructions. All these were honoured in their generations, and were the glory of their times. Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth for ever more.” Yes, my brethren, while the world shall last, and merit be regarded, “the people will tell of their wisdom, and the congregation will show forth their

* Eccclus. xl. v.

praise." While, like these our spiritual forefathers, we have no interests distinct from those of our congregations, no pursuits but such as are calculated to insure individual holiness, and social happiness, and a blessed immortality, I am persuaded we shall always experience, from our brethren of the laity, *that* indulgence to our frailties as men,—*that* attention to our instructions as ministers of Christ,—*that* support for our families,—*that* affection for our persons—and *that* co-operation with our exertions, "to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," which will sweeten all our labours,—bring glory to God,—extend and hasten the kingdom of the Redeemer,—bestow comfort on our Church, and on all the friends of true religion,—confer on our country the most signal benefits,—and, in a word, tend powerfully to the attaining of that everlasting salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord, which, together with God's glory, is the end and design of all the institutions and offices of religion. And now, to God the Father, &c. &c. &c.

S E R M O N X.

C H R I S T I A N B A P T I S M .

GO YE THEREFORE AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST.—*Matt.* xxviii. 19.

HERE is the important and divine commission, delivered by Christ to his disciples, when after his resurrection he met them on the mountain,* where he had commanded them to expect him. To convince them that he spoke as *one having authority*, he begins by assuring them “that all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth.”† And in consequence of this his supreme sovereignty over all the nations of the earth, he charges his Apostles to go forth among them to communicate to them the glad tidings of his Gospel, and to baptize them in the name of the one living God, existing in three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. No powers were ever delegated with more solemnity or more precision than these. The words are few, explicit, and unequivocal. They are so plain and simple, that they seem to defy every attempt of sophistry to elude their obvious meaning, “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations ;” or, as the original Greek expresses it—“Go ye, therefore, and *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

From this explicit injunction and fundamental commission of our Lord and Saviour, delivered on such a solemn

* *Matt.* xxviii. 16.

† *Ibid.* 18.

occasion, and in such a solemn manner, to his disciples, and their successors, I mean to take occasion to address you, respecting the sacrament of Baptism, in order to convince you, in the first place, that it is an ordinance necessary for all men; in the second place, that persons of every age may receive it with propriety; and that, in the third place, it enjoins upon us duties the most important, and privileges the most valuable in a religious life. In one word, we will endeavour to show the *necessity*, the *nature*, and the *advantages* of this Christian institution.

I. And, in the first place, as to its necessity. This, I trust, would require no other evidence in the minds of those who admit the Divine authority of the Scriptures, than the words of the text. Every person who hears them, must acknowledge that they contain an express injunction to baptize *all nations*, as well as to *teach them*. Now it is evident that this commission to be effectual, must establish a mutual obligation, between the nations who were to be taught and baptized, and those who were commanded to teach and baptize them. The commission to *teach*, necessarily implies an obligation of hearing, and the commission to *baptize*, an obligation of submitting to this ordinance. If the supreme executive authority of a nation, commands its generals to introduce certain regulations into the army, is not every soldier obliged to obey them? But this obligation is placed in the clearest point of view by our Saviour himself. The great commission delivered in the words of the text, is thus expressed by the evangelist St. Mark :* “And he said to them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Is it possible for human language to express more definitively and clearly that faith

* Mark, xvi. 15, 16.

and baptism are necessary to salvation? If it be objected that, in the sixteenth verse, condemnation is attributed only to the want of faith, it is sufficient to observe that faith must always precede the receiving of this sacrament, either by a formal and open profession by adults, or by a virtual profession of Christianity through their sponsors, by others. "Whoever," says our Saviour, "believeth not shall be damned." It would have been entirely superfluous to have added, *whosoever is not baptized* shall incur the same condemnation, because he that would not believe, could not of course be baptized.* It was, therefore, unnecessary to mention the omission of the latter as the cause of condemnation, which is previously attributed to the want of faith, especially as in the preceding verse, they are connected together as jointly necessary to salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." Nothing, therefore, appears more evident, than the existence of an obligation upon all men to submit to this ordinance of the Gospel. It is combined with the command of believing the tenets of Christianity, sanctioned by the same authority, and enforced by the same awful threats. In consequence of the clear and explicit injunction of this Christian ordinance, the Apostles and their successors have never failed to administer it through every age of the Church. Christians of every denomination had adopted its practice, till, about the middle of the seventeenth century, a society arose to reject it; which, how respectable soever it may be, is of too late a standing, and too limited an extent, to invalidate the practice of the universal Church, through so many ages, down to this day. The Apostles administered this ordinance on many occasions, and the most ancient annals of the Christian Church now upon record, concur in showing

[* Might not the Saviour's design, in this omission, have been to intimate, as an almost inevitable inference, that whoever *did* believe, *would* be baptized?—G. W. D.]

that its practice was universal. Now let me ask you, my brethren, if this primitive and general practice be not the best comment upon the genuine sense of any scriptural passage whatever? Or, shall we be bold enough to assert that at this time of day, men can be better acquainted with the meaning of Christ's words, than were his own Apostles and their immediate successors? Wherefore, think we, did Peter declare unto them, who said to him and the rest of the Apostles,* "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Or, why is it added afterwards,† "That they who gladly received his word were baptized?" For what reason did Paul baptize Lydia, and her household?‡ Or, why did he deem it necessary, after exhorting the keeper of the prison and his family to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,§ to administer to them that very night this holy ordinance, amidst all the horrors and inconveniences of confinement? Why were certain disciples, who had been already baptized unto John's baptism,|| "baptized afterwards in the name of the Lord Jesus?" Why was Paul himself commanded by Ananias,¶ to "arise, and be baptized, and wash away his sins, calling upon the Lord?" To what purpose, I say, are all these and other instances of obedience to the command of our Lord, recorded in the New Testament, if this command itself be not literally understood; or if a compliance with its spirit be deemed optional, and indifferent?

But, say the opposers of this doctrine, "We do not deny the necessity of baptism. Nay, we hold it to be essential. But the baptism which we admit, is that of the Spirit, which is more becoming the spiritual religion of Jesus Christ, and the Christian worship in spirit and in truth. This inward baptism only is conge-

* Acts, ii. 37, 38. † Ibid. ii. 41. ‡ Ibid. xvi. 15. § Ibid. xvi. 31, 33.
 || Ibid. xix. 5. ¶ Ibid. xxii. 16.

nial to the spirit of Christianity, it supersedes and abolishes the baptism by water administered by John. We profess to be baptized by receiving the Holy Ghost." My brethren, the wisdom of God's Spirit, whose glorious attribute it is to penetrate, at a single glance, the succession and the duration of ages, to foresee, and to obviate every objection that can be started against the doctrines of the Gospel, did not overlook this mode of explaining away the necessity of water baptism. In the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the practice of water baptism is evinced beyond the possibility of a doubt, even with respect to those who had received the Holy Ghost.* "While Peter yet spake these words," says the sacred historian, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word."† "Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we, and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."‡ Now let me ask any candid person, whether it does not appear evidently from these words, that Peter, besides the inward and spiritual sanctification by the Holy Ghost, did not, moreover, deem water baptism to be necessary for the initiation of his converts into the Church of Christ. He accordingly calls for water, and commands them, on whom the Holy Ghost had fallen, to be immediately baptized. And what think we, my brethren, could be the motive of his conduct, but an awful and practical sense of the commission which was delivered to him in the words of the text, to *go and teach, and baptize all nations*? Here was the ground of his practice, the sanction of his obligation. He argues not with *flesh and blood* about the natural efficacy or expediency of this ordinance. He presumes not to inquire of what service any outward ablution can be to the soul; but convinced that the disciples of his great Master must aim at the *simple doci-*

* Acts, x. 44.

† Ibid. x. 46, 47.

‡ Ibid. x. 48.

lity of children, and that the weakest things in nature are often made instrumental to the overthrow of the strongest, and to bring down the lofty imaginations of mortals to the humility of the Gospel, he questions not the propriety of this simple institution. All that he considers is, that the *Master hath spoken*, the Lord of heaven and earth hath ordained, and therefore, “in his name he commands them to be baptized.” Acquiescing in the same motives, and sanctioned by the same authority, we conceive this Christian sacrament to be *necessary*, and contend for its administration in the Church of God.

II. We come now to consider, in the second place, to what description of persons this sacrament is to be administered. I need not inform you, that in our Church, persons of every age are admitted to baptism. In entering upon this subject, I am aware that we are opening a field of discussion much too wide for the limits of a short discourse. The difficulty lies, in condensing within a narrow compass the great mass of argument and authority upon which our Church maintains her practice in this particular. In doing this, although we cannot admit the arguments of those Christians who differ from us on this point, yet we can cordially respect the motives and sincerity of this difference in opinion, especially as they conceive it to be grounded on Scripture and Apostolical practice. “What Scripture have we for infant baptism?” say they, “Where did Christ ever command it? Or where do we read that it was ever practised by any Apostle?” These questions, I conceive, contain the substance of all that can be said against infant baptism. To which we may briefly answer, that in no passage of the New Testament is this practice prohibited; and, therefore, as the Apostles were commanded to baptize all nations, we may naturally conclude, that infants also, as a constituent part of *these nations*, should be considered as proper subjects for this ordinance. To *baptize*, is a word deemed by

the ancient Persian interpreters, and many others, synonymous with the phrase, *to make Christians*. So that, when Christ commissioned his disciples to *baptize* all nations, he ordered them to teach and *make them* Christians. Now, how were they to be *made Christians*, but by baptism? To be made a Christian, is to be received into the *kingdom* or Church of God, for Christ says plainly, “except a man, (or a person,) be born again of water and the Spirit, he (or she) cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Baptism is, therefore, the door by which *all* are to enter into the Church of Christ. And why should infants be excluded, especially as our Saviour says expressly,* that to “*such as these* belongs the kingdom of heaven;” and accordingly he said to his disciples,† who rebuked those who brought children unto him, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.”‡ This *coming unto* Christ, evidently means becoming *his disciples*, which, as has been shown above, can be done only by being born again of water and the Spirit. Besides, it cannot but appear very agreeable to the righteousness and mercy of God, that since we partake of the corruption and curse of the first Adam in our infancy, without any personal act of ours, we should also be capable of partaking of the remedies and blessings of the second Adam in our infancy, without our own explicit act, or any personal covenant of our own. If, therefore, the expediency of infant baptism be implied in the general expressions of Scripture upon this head, no objection can arise from its not being expressly commanded. Indeed, it appears that as children were admitted into the covenant of God by circumcision, and became disciples of Moses by baptism; so Christ, in abolishing the former painful ceremony of the law, chose to retain the latter simple mode of initiation, only changing its object, and annexing special graces to its practice. Besides, our Saviour spake many

* Matt. xix.

† Ibid.

‡ See also Mark ix.

things to his disciples, concerning the kingdom of God, both before his passion and after his resurrection, which are not written in the Scriptures. And who will say, that among these verbal commands, there might not have been one for the baptizing of infants, especially as it is confessed, on all hands, that this practice was very general in the primitive Church?

But, it is said, why do not we find instances of the Apostles themselves conferring baptism upon children? The reason, I conceive, is, that this practice was so much a matter of course, that it did not require any special notice. It appears to have been the common mode, or ceremony, of receiving persons of every age into Christian discipleship and communion. And accordingly we meet with several instances, in which the heads of families and their household were baptized by the Apostles. This was the case with Lydia and the Jailer of Thyatira, whose whole families are said to have been baptized by St. Paul; and as to the household of Lydia, it is not mentioned that any branch of it either believed or professed the doctrines of Christ. If, therefore, nothing is to be admitted respecting Christian ordinances, but what is expressly delivered in the Scriptures, we must conclude that this woman's family was baptized without any previous belief. And, as this is a conclusion which every advocate for Christian baptism must reject, so we may reasonably assert, that as these families were probably composed of children as well as of grown persons, both were admitted to baptism, though it be not expressly mentioned in the Scriptures. Wherefore no argument against infant baptism can arise from the silence of the Scriptures, and when, during the ages immediately succeeding that of the Apostles, various pretences were started for deferring this ordinance, no idea of its *unlawfulness* was ever alleged, nor any proof to this purpose ever drawn from holy writ. The notions of some upon this subject had indeed become tainted with superstition, while others apprehended lest re-

ceiving this sacrament might expose them to persecution ; but they who have investigated this controversy with the greatest accuracy could never discover that baptism was ever withheld from children upon any Scripture plea during the first ages of the Church. The practice, therefore, was deemed lawful, and I could allege many unanswerable authorities to prove that it was universal.* These authorities are to be found in every treatise that has been written on this subject ; and as they are not, I believe, denied by the opposers of this doctrine, it is unnecessary to mention them at this time. If they do not appear to all conclusive, respecting this ancient practice, they must, at any rate, be allowed to form a strong body of presumptive evidence in its favour ; for of all comments upon a controverted point of doctrine, the primitive belief and practice of the Church must be admitted to be among the most satisfactory.

As to the expediency of this practice, it appears to be obvious, from the nature of the institution itself. For in the *first* place, baptism implies a dedication, or consecration of baptized persons to God. By this ordinance they become sanctified to his special service. Now why should children be excluded from this privilege ? “ If thou hast an infant,” says an ancient Greek father,† “ let not iniquity get time ; let it be sanctified in infancy ; let it in the tender age, be consecrated by the Spirit ;” “ because,” as St. Augustine observes,‡ “ this consecration, and remission of original sin, is rendered effectual to them through the faith of those by whom they are presented to baptism.” And for this reason, when we baptize a child, we not only mark its forehead with the sign of the cross, as a badge and acknowledgment of its more immediate relation to Christ ; but we pray also to God, that he *would receive the infant for his own child by adoption.*

* Fidus' Letter to Cyprian, A. D. 254.
Serm. 50.

† Greg. Nazianzen.

‡ Aug.

Secondly ; by baptism, we are admitted into covenant with God. We stipulate solemnly on our part, to believe his doctrine, and to fulfil his commandments; while he condescends, on the other hand, to pardon our sins, and lead us to salvation. This stipulation, indeed, cannot be expressed by infants themselves, but as this solemn admission into covenant with God was deemed very important by the ancient Church, their sponsors and sureties were permitted to answer for them; and were obliged, moreover, to inform these children, when arrived at a competent age, what a solemn *vow*, *promise*, and *profession* they had made by them. In the meantime, infants enjoy all the blessings of this sacred covenant. They are very members incorporate of the Church of Christ, entitled to all its privileges, and sure of its rewards.

It may be observed, farther, in answer to those who object to the admission of infants to baptism, on account of *incapacity*—that the Jewish infants were admitted into the covenant by circumcision, at eight days old, by God's express command, and that there is the same reason for infants of Christian parents, to be admitted to baptism, may thus be proved. The covenant entered into by God with Abraham, of which we have an account,* was, as St. Paul plainly tells us,† the Gospel covenant. "The Scripture," says he, "foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the *Gospel to Abraham*," that is, delivered beforehand the glad tidings of that event to Abraham, in the following words: "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made," *that is*, Christ. "This, I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ; the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." The covenant, therefore, that was made by God with Abraham, was the Gospel covenant, contain-

* Gen. xvii.

† Gal. iii.

ing the promise of blessing to all nations in Christ. Of admission into this covenant, circumcision, at that time, was the appointed seal. It was not, therefore, a mere legal institution, but the *seal* of the *Gospel covenant*, administered to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the introduction of the law. Our Saviour told the Jews accordingly, that "Moses gave unto them circumcision, not because it was of Moses, but of the fathers; and St. Paul tells us,* "By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles." The *seal*, then, is altered, but the covenant remains the same.

"A baptized child dwells secure," as a very pious and learned father expresses it,† "under the protection and blessing of its Lord and its God." By baptism, moreover, we become the members of Christ, children of God, heirs of heaven, and fit candidates for salvation. We become regenerate and born anew, we *rise from the death* of sin to a life of righteousness. "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ," says St. Paul,‡ and "ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ," for this very reason, "because as many of you as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."§ And, "if sons," says the same Apostle,|| "then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Now, let me ask, if the most luminous evidence be not necessary for depriving children of these mighty blessings? One ancient father,¶ calls this sacrament the *key of heaven*. Another says,** "for this cause do we baptize infants, that there may be added unto them holiness, righteousness, adoption, and an inheritance." St. Athanasius, commenting upon the words of our Saviour, "Suffer little children to come unto me;" and on those of St. Paul, "but now are your children holy," has this expression: "The baptized infants of believers

* 1 Cor. xii. 13. † St. Bernard. ‡ Gal. iii. 27. § Rom. 8. 17. || Gal. iv. 7. ¶ Greg. Naz. ** St. Chrysostom.

do, as undefiled and believing, enter into the kingdom of heaven." The invaluable and all-important graces of *justification* and sanctification, are entailed upon this ordinance: "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins," says Ananias to Paul. "Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ," says Peter,* "for the remission of sins." And as to *sanctification*,† "not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." And in unison with this doctrine, Peter says to the Jewish converts,‡ "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is made to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Now will any person acquainted with the Scriptures, deny that *all* have sinned in Adam, and that infants, as well as others, stand in need of justifying grace? And if this be the case, why deny them the privilege of baptism for the remission of sins of every description? Why shut against them this "*gate* of the Church; this door of grace; this first entrance of the saints into the everlasting fellowship with God and the Church;" as St. Augustine styles this sacrament? The want of actual faith is the chief ground of difference of opinion upon this subject. Let us remember, however, what St. Paul assures us, that "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband."§ Why then *may* not the unbelieving infant be so far sanctified by the faith of its believing sponsors, as to entitle it to the manifold blessings of this Christian ordinance, from which there is not a text in the New Testament, that either directly or indirectly authorizes their exclusion? Upon these arguments, and a multitude of others, that could easily be alleged, does our Church, and

* Acts ii. 38. † Tit. iii. 4, 5. ‡ Acts ii. 38. § 1 Cor. vii. 14.

many other Christian Churches, ground the practice of infant baptism; and to those who consider them attentively, I trust they will appear neither unsatisfactory, nor unscriptural.

They who admit the validity of these arguments, will want no motive to bring their children to baptism. When once they are convinced that the gracious privileges, and precious blessings which are represented in the Scripture as annexed to this sacrament, may be secured to their children, they will be surely eager for their receiving it. They will not deprive their offspring of this inherent right, this glorious inheritance, but will cheerfully and expeditiously suffer them "to go unto Christ, and forbid them not." In a word, my brethren, if infants stand in need of baptism, if they be benefitted by baptism, if they have a right to baptism, let reason and religion, let the sentiments of nature, plead in their favour; and let me conclude with the words of an illustrious Doctor of the ancient Church (St. Augustin) on this very subject: "Let me recommend," says he, "to your care and charity, the cause of those who cannot speak for themselves." "*Commendaverim charitati vestro causam eorum, qui pro se loqui non possunt.*"

As to the manner of administering this sacrament, our Church admits the application of water to be made either by dipping, or pouring water upon the person to be baptized. The mode is at the option of the candidate for this sacrament. But, as the application of water is merely a symbol, sign, or type of the inward graces conferred upon the soul, and as an outward washing may be equally well performed by pouring water upon the person, as by plunging, the former mode has been generally adopted, as attended with less inconvenience and danger. The Scriptures are silent upon this matter; for although we read of persons going down into the water, and being baptized in rivers, yet it is not mentioned whether, in these instances,

they were dipped under the water, or it was poured over them. Very ancient pictures represent John the Baptist pouring water upon our Saviour's head, in the river Jordan ; and it seems very probable, that when Paul baptized the jailer, and his family in prison, during the very night in which he instructed them, he hardly met with conveniences for doing it by immersion. But as I observed above, this manner of baptizing is valid and proper, but, in our opinion, by no means essential. Be the mode, however, what it may, all must be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as our Lord commanded in the words of the text.

And now, my brethren, I trust the little that has been said in the discussion of this subject, to enforce the *necessity*, explain the *nature*, and evince the *advantages* of the sacrament of baptism, is sufficient to confirm those in their belief of this doctrine, who profess themselves members of our Church. It is not my desire nor my intention, to open any door to the intricacies, much less to the acrimony of controversy ; but merely to enable those, whom it is my duty to instruct, to be always ready to give a reason of the *faith that is in them*, and induce them to bring their children to this sacrament. And the good Lord make what has been said, to be effectual to the strengthening of this faith, and to rendering it fruitful in all holiness of living, as our baptismal vows and stipulations require. Now, to God the Father, &c. &c. &c.

SERMON XI.

CONFIRMATION.

AND WHEN THE APOSTLES, WHICH WERE AT JERUSALEM, HEARD THAT SAMARIA HAD RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD, THEY SENT UNTO THEM PETER AND JOHN: WHO, WHEN THEY HAD COME DOWN, PRAYED FOR THEM, THAT THEY MIGHT RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST: (FOR AS YET HE WAS FALLEN UPON NONE OF THEM, ONLY THEY WERE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.) THEN LAID THEY THEIR HANDS ON THEM, AND THEY RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST.

Acts viii. 14, 15, 16, 17.

IT is, undoubtedly, the duty of every Christian, to regulate his life, as near as can be, by what was taught and practised by Christ and his Apostles. They who are appointed to the highest order in the Church, and are principally charged with its government, must be careful to establish and administer it by the rules delivered in the Holy Scriptures, and the practice of the primitive ages of Christianity; and they who move in a private capacity, may reasonably conclude, that their spiritual interests are never more secure, than when prosecuted in the way which the Church prescribes, authorized by holy writ, and apostolic usage. It is a peculiar happiness of our Church, that our ecclesiastical superiors require compliance with no other ordinances, than such as are evidently grounded on Scripture, and the discipline of those times, when the Christian profession was in its greatest purity and perfection. Thus, with respect to *confirmation*, for which all baptized persons, when come to years of discretion, are called upon

by our Church to prepare, it denotes the solemn laying on of the hands of the chief minister or bishop, upon those who have been baptized, in order to confirm them in their Christian profession and privileges, and to convey additional graces to those already received, in order to enable them to keep and perform the baptismal vow and promise, and to discharge the duties of a Christian life, to which they bind themselves by a renewed and public engagement.

The words of the text afford a plain precedent for this rite, and the mode of proceeding with Christian converts. The Samaritans, we are informed, had embraced the truths of the Gospel, for they “had received the word of God, and were baptized :” that office being performed by Philip, who was of an inferior order in the Church, and had no commission to proceed any farther. The Apostles being made acquainted with this fact, and concluding that something besides baptism was required for establishing the new converts in their faith, sent two of their own superior order, namely, Peter and John, to confirm them in their Christian profession, by the laying on of their hands, and devout invocation of the Spirit : whereupon, we read, that “they received the Holy Ghost.” Wherefore, as Episcopal confirmation appears to rest upon such solid and sacred foundations, and is intended to convey an additional measure of God’s Holy Spirit, it becomes the duty of every obedient child of the Church, to submit to her injunction in this particular ; especially as it was pressed upon their sponsors in baptism, to see that they should comply with it at a proper time, when our baptismal vows and resolutions are to be solemnly renewed. In this rite, we readily perceive many substantial blessings : for by what are Christians distinguished, and made the true disciples of Christ, but by the spirit, and resolution to walk steadfastly in his institutions and laws, and by the godly direction of our teachers in the Lord. No advances can be made towards Christian perfection, nor unanimity, peace and order be properly main-

tained, without such resolutions : and these should be made by Christians at an early period of life ; and the more solemn the engagement, the more deep and lasting is the impression likely to be. To add solemnity to this holy resolution, was confirmation designed ; to implore on those who receive it, the divine blessing by the mouth of the highest officer in the Church, that they may be enabled to fulfil their baptismal promises.

Confirmation being thus expedient and beneficial, let us consider with what preparation of mind, it ought to be received. Now, I conceive that they who wish to dispose themselves duly to take upon them the Gospel covenant, can do no less, than, *first*, to strive to obtain a firm belief and competent knowledge of the Gospel doctrines ; *secondly*, to intend with full purpose of heart, to use all diligence, that their whole behaviour be regulated by such knowledge and faith, according to the letter and spirit of the Scriptures ; and, *lastly*, that all this should be attended with constant care and study, to lead the rest of their lives answerable to this beginning, that their faith and virtue may daily be improved, until at length they are brought to God's everlasting kingdom and glory.

I. *First*, then, a firm belief and competent knowledge of the Gospel doctrines, are requisite to confirmation. For how can any persons solemnly dedicate themselves to God the Father, for the sake of God the Son, and through the assistance of the Holy Ghost, unless they be, in some measure, instructed in, and assent to, these great truths, relating to the three sacred persons of the Godhead ; unless they know and believe, that the supreme Maker and Governor of the world, who formed, sustains, and preserves all mankind, and will one day summon all nations, and generations of men, to stand before him in judgment, has openly and explicitly declared his will and purpose to save mankind, by their entering into a covenant with him, through Jesus

Christ ; unless they be convinced and made sensible, that the terms of this covenant are, “ that they renounce the Devil and all his works,” the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh,—that they believe all the articles of the Christian faith,—“ and are resolved to keep God’s holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of their life.” They must also be firmly persuaded, that while they continue faithful to this covenant, God has engaged to accept them as members of Christ’s mystical body, the Church, and that they shall reign with their head in glory. That he will receive them as his own beloved children, and confer on them a sure title to heaven and happiness. To bring you, my young friends, to this faith and knowledge, the holy Scriptures were given, and to make your attainment of Christian knowledge still more easy, you are furnished in the catechism with so plain and perfect a collection of scriptural doctrines on all points necessary for a Christian to believe and know, that it is hardly possible for you to be ignorant of your duty, unless by your own fault and inattention. To assume the character of consistent Christians, it is necessary to understand what the name implies, and what obligations it comprehends. You cannot enter into a covenant with God, without being acquainted with what services it requires, and what rewards it holds out. True it is, that the tender love and piety of your parents, or friends, induced them to make an early offering of you in your infancy, to serve the living God, when you could not possibly understand these things; reasonably presuming, that when you should be capable of this knowledge, you would gladly assent to an agreement and engagement made by them of such infinite advantage to you. You have now attained to an age to comprehend these things, and their incalculable importance, and are now solemnly called upon with sincerity of mind and heart, to make that your own act and deed, which others kindly did for you, when you were unable to

act for yourselves. To neglect this, when opportunity offers, looks like a tacit renunciation of your religion, and a rejection of the benefits of redemption. It amounts to an implied revocation of the promises made at your baptism, and consequently of some of the special graces which that sacrament was instituted to confer. Considerations of this nature will, I trust, induce you to regard confirmation as no trifling ordinance, but as a rite eminently calculated to create and strengthen in you those holy dispositions and habits which Christianity enjoins upon all its professors. You are now entering upon a new course of life, as baptized Christians; and as apprentices to some fresh employment, or service, naturally inquire what work and labour, what care and attendance their masters may expect, so you should reflect seriously upon the duties and obligations, which you now take upon you in the service of your heavenly Master, to perform the same with fidelity and perseverance, to the end of your lives,—that Master who stands in no need of your services, and claims them for no other end, than to promote his own glory by your final happiness. It will be no excuse for the neglect of duty, that you were ignorant of it, if want of knowledge proceed from disinclination to practice it. Ignorance no longer can excuse a violation or omission of duty, than while it is not in our power to remove it. When once information is within our reach, and we neglect to obtain it, this neglect, instead of furnishing an excuse, will prove an aggravation of the sins, into which our ignorance betrays us. Fatally erroneous, therefore, is the disposition and conduct of those, who, averse to information, wilfully put far from them the light and knowledge of God and his laws, in hopes of being excused in their evil and irreligious courses by the ignorance of what they know will condemn them, and place their transgressions in a more glaring point of view. Far more wise is it, and safe, to acquaint ourselves with God and our duty, before sin has got the dominion over us; to be-

lieve feelingly in God, before our guilt make it necessary to wish he did not behold us, to judge and to punish us ; to acknowledge, and reverence divine revelation, before our lives, blinded and corrupted, are at variance with those examples and rules, by which it directs us to walk. In short, it is every man's bounden duty, and truest interest, to embrace the earliest opportunities of understanding himself, to inquire to what end he was sent into the world, and the means of attaining the purpose of his creation. In youth, he should call to mind his beginning and latter end, and remember his Creator and Judge, before he has done any thing to dishonour him, and provoke his almighty vengeance. An aversion to such thoughts and knowledge as this, is among the proofs of man's apostacy, and is altogether unreasonable. For is it any hindrance to the enjoyments of this life, to know the means of inheriting life eternal? Is it any way becoming intelligent beings, to lavish all their care and solicitude upon their perishing bodies, in providing for their pleasure, support and ornament, while they feel little or no concern for the welfare of their precious and immortal souls, after they go hence, and are no more seen in their earthly dwellings? Ought it not to be our hearty endeavour and prayer, to walk so as to please God in this present transitory state, that we may rest with him in the mansions which endure for ever? Think not, then, my young friends, that it is too much to call upon you, on this occasion, to revolve seriously in your minds, what you must do to be saved, and escape the wrath to come ; and to convince yourselves that this can be done only by complying with the promises made at your baptism, and an open profession of your Christian faith. Upon the stability of your performance of this baptismal engagement, depend the joy and comfort of your future and eternal condition.

II. This performance, therefore, must be the object of your steady purpose and invariable resolutions, which was the

second particular, meant to be impressed upon your minds. Accurate knowledge and Gospel faith, are certainly among the first steps towards leading a Christian life, and ought to precede the dedication of ourselves to God's service. But something more is required ; you must also examine your inward purposes, and see whether you be seriously disposed to regulate your whole conduct by the letter and spirit of Christ's religion. To render your hearts an acceptable offering to God, you must convince yourselves, that they are disposed to obey him, and it would seem that no motives could be wanting to make any persons sincere in their religious determinations, because nothing else can prevent their being miserable, and secure their final happiness. Known to God, and hateful, is every species of hypocrisy. To what purpose, then, can any persons draw near to him with their lips, and outward profession, when their hearts are far from him, and are full of the world ? To those who live regardless of God and religion, no prospect can present itself but of regret and misery, in a future world ; and even in the present state of existence, the indulgence of vicious passions, is sooner or later attended with disgrace, repentance, and wretchedness. What is generally the reward of unrighteous dealing, of harsh and unfeeling behaviour, to our fellow-men, but the danger of contracting habits of injustice and profligacy, which cry to heaven for exemplary vengeance ? Is not the wild intoxication of unlawful pleasures, attended with the stings of bitter remorse ? And will not ill-gotten preferment, opulence, and favour, fail their possessors in the hour of death, and leave nothing in reversion, but a fearful and fiery looking-for of judgment, from Him, who is terrible in vengeance ; and whom, after having presumptuously and grievously offended, the sinner has taken no measures to pacify and appease ? Contrasted with such a character, how enviable is the lot of the pious Christian ! He is active in all his duties, and fervent in the love of his Creator, and accordingly he delights in meditating on the

divine will and precepts. He religiously keeps holy the Sabbath-day, by attending diligently to pious instructions, to the public exercises and ordinances of religion. He never fails, at least in the morning and evening, to lift up his heart unto God in the heavens, and by holy thoughts and earnest prayer, to solicit the divine benediction and graces, to accompany him through the several stages and circumstances of life, and enable him to pursue the things that are for his peace. He is careful to deal truly and justly with his neighbour; to live within the bounds of moderation and prudence; to exercise peace and charity towards all men, and strive continually to check and restrain whatever may be criminal in his thoughts, his words, and his actions. To persons of these principles and conduct, peace and conscious satisfaction can never be wanting during the days of their pilgrimage; and when they are called away by death, it can be attended with no great surprise, nor terror, because they have habitually exercised themselves in a preparation for this affecting change.

It is highly needful, my young friends, to habituate yourselves, by times, to the consideration of the different state and feeling of the wicked and the righteous; of the corroding fears and anxieties of the former, and the inward peace and comfort of the latter. When familiar with these interesting and momentous ideas, you will never be at a loss whose example to follow; but with full purpose of heart, you will be induced to dedicate yourselves to God's service,—to long earnestly that your lot may be among the righteous, and resolving, by God's grace, to avoid all the ways of iniquity, to escape the dismal punishment that attends them. When you are advanced thus far, and have elevated your minds to a serious and deliberate intention to make piety towards God, and good-will to men, the leading character and concern of your lives; when you have laboured to cleanse your hearts from every sinful affection, and mean to proceed daily in all virtue and godliness of living,—then may you

follow our Lord's direction to the cleansed leper,—go show yourselves to God's chief minister, and offer yourselves to be confirmed in your holy resolutions, by receiving the benefit of his blessing and prayers, with full assurance of receiving a degree of grace in proportion to your faith and preparation. In a word, by frequently meditating on the necessity and importance of a holy life, and your own insufficiency, the benefits of this ordinance will naturally rise in your estimation; and, of course, move you to come worthily to it, and afterwards to use all diligence to keep the solemn resolutions, which you then made for yourselves, and invigorate your hopes of fresh supplies of heavenly assistance to facilitate and animate a due compliance with all your Christian duties.

III. And this, your bounden obligation, to lead the rest of your lives suitable to the profession made in Confirmation, is the *last* particular which was proposed to your consideration. Remember, then, my young friends, that as at your confirmation you avow yourselves Christians, and in covenant with God, to serve him faithfully through Jesus Christ, so all your hopes of future happiness depend upon your fidelity to this covenant; for the name of Christians will never avail those who are not led by the examples and precepts of Christ. To have begun well, and not to proceed in a Christian course of living, only serves to aggravate the guilt of a disorderly life; and St. Peter tells us accordingly,* “If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they shall be again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.” This

* 2 Pet. ii 20, 21.

is, indeed, a solemn declaration ; but instead of alarming or discouraging any persons from engaging betimes in a religious profession, and remembering their Creator in the days of their youth, it is meant to remind them of the necessity of keeping such a strict guard over their thoughts and actions, that no part of their conduct may contradict such an important and solemn engagement. But we must begin well before we can succeed in accomplishing our purposes. The sooner we set out in a good course, the more time shall we have to secure a blessing upon our endeavours, and the less difficulty and interruption shall we experience from the indulgence of evil habits and sinful inclinations. To keep yourselves steady in the paths of virtue and holiness, you will do well frequently to recollect how often you have bound yourselves to walk in the same all the days of your life. At baptism your friends promised for you, at confirmation, and whenever you receive the holy communion, you engage for yourselves. And what think you must they expect, who after these solemn and repeated ties, still go on in the ways of folly, and indulge themselves wilfully in known and habitual sins ? Reflect, that these obligations are highly honourable and advantageous, and that you are bound by nature and reason, as well as by revelation, to observe them. Will not your indifference to, or your neglect of them, argue a kind of perjury with respect to Almighty God, and a settled hostility against your own souls. Wherefore, in point of duty, reason, honesty, interest, and credit, you are bound to believe and act, as was promised for you in baptism ; and this obligation you are now required to take upon yourselves, with a full determination, by God's help, to perform the same, and hearts full of gratitude and love to your heavenly Father, who has called you to a state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, and now invites you by his authorized minister to be further confirmed in the hope of receiving the fruits thereof to your endless comfort, and

through the prayer of grace to continue his servants to your lives' end.

You have now heard what is required of those who are to be confirmed; what is necessary to render you Christians indeed, and not in name only and profession. It consists in a competent knowledge of the Gospel doctrines, and especially in a full understanding of your baptismal engagement and vow; in a steady and serious purpose of taking that engagement upon yourselves, with a settled resolution of living up, as nearly as may be, to the doctrines and precepts contained in the Scriptures. This knowledge and pious resolve must be attended with daily prayers and sincere endeavours to lead the rest of your lives answerably to this beginning; that so your faith and virtue may be always improving till they bring you to God's everlasting kingdom and glory. What now remains, but to implore the Almighty, the Father of all mercy and goodness, to vouchsafe us his grace and Holy Spirit, that we may so use this, and all other religious ordinances appointed to confirm us in holiness, as may at length make us meet partakers of everlasting happiness through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,—to whom, with the Father and ever blessed Spirit, three persons and one God, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, thanksgiving, and praise, henceforth and for ever. Amen.



S E R M O N X I I .

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

FOR AS OFTEN AS YE EAT THIS BREAD, AND DRINK THIS CUP, YE DO
SHOW THE LORD'S DEATH TILL HE COME.—1 *Cor.* xi. 26.

CHRISTIANITY is remarkable for nothing more than for the simplicity by which it is characterized. With respect to faith in its doctrines, it requires the submission of the heart to the reception of divine truth, much more than any peculiar capacity for understanding abstruse speculations; and when men are willing to receive instruction, it will always be supplied them in a sufficient degree for securing the great object of religion, the salvation of their souls. In point of morality and practice, Christianity holds out to men the most sublime and purest lessons; at the same time it speaks to them as they are men, and making allowance for the frailty of their nature, it enjoins them to do their best, and to trust that their sincere, though imperfect endeavours, will be rendered acceptable to God, through the perfect merits of One, who lived and died, and rose again for their justification.

The same character of simplicity extends to the external rites and ordinances of Christianity. They are perfectly intelligible, and easy to be performed, and eminently calculated to impart joy and consolation to the heart, if it be at all affected by the serious impressions of religion. Thus, the institution of the Sabbath of one day in seven, on which man and beast are permitted to rest from their

labours, and a pause is put to the ordinary business of the world ; on which, in some measure, all distinctions are removed, and all men, the high and low, the rich and poor, seem to be placed on the same level, and to bend, with equal humility, before the throne of the Creator ; a day on which, in the Christian institution, nothing oppressive is imposed upon its professors ; “ no burdens hard to be borne ; ” but the simple offerings of praise and thanksgiving, and of prayer from a pure heart, are alone required from all who come before their Maker, depending on the intercession of their common Mediator—what institution, we may say, could possibly have been devised, more free from vain pomp, and more conformable to the best feelings of human nature ?

In like manner, the two Christian sacraments, which our Lord himself enjoined on his disciples, are rites, or ordinances, very simple and easy, and refer, in a beautiful manner, to the most interesting of all events. The sacrament of baptism, by which we are initiated into the Christian Church, and into the privileges of the Gospel covenant, requires no other outward action than an application of water, which, by means of that element, shadows out the most excellent of all the benefits which God has conferred upon man ; nothing less, in fact, than that purification of the soul which is effected by the Holy Spirit, and is promised to all those who sincerely ask it.

The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, for which we are now preparing, is equally easy in its performance ; and if we attend to the several circumstances of it, will appear to be a most appropriate institution, and admirably adapted for affecting the mind with those impressions which our Lord had in view, when he was pleased to enjoin it. A few observations to this purpose, cannot fail to be useful on the present occasion ; and I shall, therefore, beg leave to draw your attention, first, to the circumstances in which this sacrament was instituted ; secondly, to the manner in

which the rite is performed ; and lastly, to those impressions which it is meant and calculated to convey to the mind.

I. *First.* The circumstances in which this sacrament was instituted, are detailed by the Evangelists, and by St. Paul, in that part of his writings from which the text is taken ; and never, surely, in any narrative, was there a collection of such highly interesting particulars. Our Saviour knew, that the close of his important life was at hand ; that the design of his mission was about to be accomplished ; that he was soon to pass through his last and most agonizing trial ; that already one of his disciples had consented to betray him ; that the rest would desert him in his distress ; that all of them, that very night, would be offended because of him, for “ the shepherd was to be smitten, and the sheep of the flock to be scattered abroad.” With these thoughts labouring in his mind, he resolved to have yet one meeting of love and familiar intercourse, with those whom his Father had given him, and whom “ he loved unto the end ;” and, availing himself accordingly of the opportunity presented by the feast of the Passover, “ when the even was come,” (says the Evangelist,) “ he sat down with the twelve.” Such was the interesting period at which this sacrament was instituted. “ The Son of Man was about to be betrayed into the hands of sinners.” All his labours of love, undertaken and performed for the sake of our sinful race, were about to meet with this unworthy return ! His prophetic eye saw the scenes that were preparing ; beheld the machinations of hell ; and He whose love for men was so intense, must have been affected with the deepest sorrow, that they were to become the instruments of such shocking depravity. Thus, like a father on his death-bed, surrounded by his children, he sat among his disciples, informing them in terms too plain to be misunderstood, that he was not long to be with them. With a

view of impressing them strongly with the awful importance of the events which were about to happen, “as they were eating he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, take, eat, this is my body; and he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

A few remarks on these words of the institution may not be improper in this place. “Jesus took bread and blessed it.” The Greek word used by St. Matthew and Mark, we translate *blessed*, but that used by St. Luke and St. Paul, is translated, generally, *give thanks*; and this word, supported in both cases by many ancient manuscripts, appears to indicate the action of our Saviour on this occasion. The terms, indeed, in this passage, are nearly of the same import, as both *blessing* and *giving thanks*, were common at these times. But what was it our Lord blessed? Not the bread,—though the word *it*, improperly supplied in our version, has led many into this opinion. It appears, then, that the words of the three Evangelists, and of St. Paul, refer not to the bread, but to God, the dispenser of every good; it being more than probable, that our Lord conformed himself to that invariable Jewish custom of acknowledging God as the author of every good and perfect gift, by giving thanks on “breaking the bread,” and taking the cup at their ordinary meals. Every Jew, who omitted this duty was considered as a person guilty of sacrilege. And from this custom we derive the decent and laudable practice of *saying grace*; that is, of giving thanks before and after our meals. “And brake it, and gave it to his disciples.” We often read in Scripture of *breaking bread*, but never of *cutting* it. The Jewish people had nothing similar to our high raised loaf; their bread was made broad and thin, and was consequently very brittle, so that to divide it, there was no need of a knife. “That the breaking of this bread to be *distributed*,” says

Dr. Whitby, "is a necessary part of this rite, is evident, first, by the continual mention made of it by St. Paul, and all the Evangelists, when they speak of the institution of this sacrament, which shows it to be a necessary part of it. Secondly, Christ says, 'take, eat, this is my body *broken* for you.'* But when the elements are not *broken*, it can no more be said, 'this is my body broken for you,' than where the elements are *not given*. Thirdly, our Lord said, 'Do this in remembrance of me;' that is, eat this bread broken, in remembrance of my body broken on the cross. Now, where no body *broken* is *distributed*, there nothing can be eaten in memorial of his *broken* body. Lastly, the Apostle, by saying, 'the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ,' sufficiently informs us, that the eating of his *broken* body is necessary to that end.† Hence it was that the rite of *distributing bread broken*, continued for a thousand years, and was observed in the Roman Church in the eleventh century." With respect to the next words of our Saviour, "this is my body," we must observe, that Christ had nothing in his hands at this time, but part of that unleavened bread, which he and his disciples had been eating at supper, and therefore he could mean no more than this, viz. that the bread which he was now breaking, *represented* his body, which in the course of a few hours was to be crucified for them. Common sense unclouded by the mists of superstition and prejudice, and reason unawed by human authority, could not possibly annex any but this plain, consistent, and rational meaning, to these words. For can any sensible person, who permits himself to think freely on the subject, really believe, that when Christ took up that bread and brake it, that it was his own body which he held in his own hands, and which himself brake to pieces, and which he and his disciples did eat? Can we be surprised, my brethren, at the folly and

* 1 Cor. xi. 24.

† Ibid. x. 10.

wickedness of mankind, when we reflect that a refusal to believe such absurdities has frequently lighted up the fires of persecution, deluged Christendom with blood, and made this holy institution, intended for a cement of all the lovely affections of our nature, ■ pretext for unrelenting hatred and persecution. It would be easy to dwell with large discourse on the other circumstances attending the institution of this rite. I could show you from numerous passages, both of sacred and profane writers, that instead of the words to *signify* or *represent*, they frequently use the verb *to be*, and that this must have been the case, when our Saviour said, “this is my body, this is my blood;” as the language in which he spake, has no word that answers to our verb to *signify* or *represent*. I could show you that “the blood of the New Testament shed for many for the remission of sins,” refers to the redemption of all mankind; of the Jews, in the first instance, and then of the whole world;—that, by virtue of the *new* covenant, there might be but one fold, as there is but one shepherd; and that God might be all in all. But these are subjects that would lead us far beyond the limits of a pulpit discourse. I shall only, therefore, remark further, that this method of instituting a memorial of his death, was quite in character with the manner adopted by our Lord in all his instructions and common conduct to his disciples. It ever seemed a part of his plan to show, that wisdom might be collected from every incident, and that the most serious truths might be impressed upon the mind from the occasion of very slight events. Thus his instructions were constantly drawn from some of the circumstances of his own, or his disciples’ situation; and every common occurrence in their lives he converted into a source of useful doctrine, or practical duty. On this occasion, bread and wine were on the table before them, and by a natural reference to his body and blood, to which these elements bore some resemblance, he made them symbols

of the most important event that was ever to happen in the annals of time.

From the important and affecting circumstances attending the institution of this sacrament, let us pass on, *secondly*, to the manner of its observance. The event to be commemorated, is the death of our Saviour for the sins of the world. The manner in which it is commemorated, is not in sackcloth and ashes, in tears and lamentations, in stripes and penances. We are not required "to give our first-born for our transgression, the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul." We are not commanded, or advised to go forth as pilgrims to the holy sepulchre, to collect from every quarter, relics of the cross, or to wear out the sacred pavements in prostrations and kneeling. Nothing harsh, nothing burthensome, nothing melancholy, is required at our hands. We are only enjoined to meet in Christian fellowship, around the table of our Lord, to personate the holy Apostles; and to receive the sacred elements which he formerly distributed to those well-tried servants, when he met them, for the last time, before his death. We are desired to kneel together with the kind affections of Christian brethren, of mortals, who partake in the same misfortune, who look forward to the same deliverance, and profess loyalty and love to the same divine Master. Our beloved Redeemer has done so much for us, that we are required to do little more, than, with faithful and honest hearts, glowing with love and gratitude, to look forward to the completion of his work. He asks nothing that is grievous and distasteful to our feelings. He asks only for our hearts. He only bids us to remember him, and the manner in which we are to do so, is not with gloomy apprehensions, with downcast, and sorrowful countenances, but with cheerful hearts, and by a social and friendly ceremony. "This do in remembrance of me." I require nothing more than that ye eat this bread and drink this cup, with dispositions and feelings suitable to a devout recollection of all that I have done and suffered for you.

These dispositions and impressions, which the sacrament of the Lord's Supper requires should be excited in our hearts, we now proceed, in the *third* place, to consider. We find them implied by St. Paul, in the text : " As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." Let us ponder these important words, " ye do show the Lord's death." Let us, I say, contemplate this circumstance, the *Lord's death*, and we shall readily perceive, what meditations ought to employ us, while we celebrate its solemn memorial. It was, then, the death of one, who through the whole course of his life, displayed the most ardent love to mankind, and whose delight was to forward the good of man and the glory of God. The death of the best of men, would in itself be a very affecting circumstance, although it was attended with no reference to us. We read with admiration and delight the stories of the illustrious wise and good in all ages ; and when we frequently find that these worthies have fallen a sacrifice to the barbarous policy of their opponents, to the ferocious fury of the populace, or the rage of bloody persecutors, we follow them into their last scenes, and look up to their unbending fortitude, in their hours of trial, with feelings of reverence and sympathetic sorrow. Suppose, then, the author of the Christian faith to be nothing more than a man, to be a great moral instructor, " who went about doing good ;" yet even in this view he bears the highest character for every virtue, which has hitherto adorned the human nature, without the smallest taint, or admixture of vice. The death, therefore, of this distinguished person, especially since, in the circumstances attending it, he displayed so remarkably all his eminent qualities of fortitude, patience, and resignation to the Divine will, and of brotherly forgiveness to man, is really the most interesting object which we can contemplate in the whole history of mankind, even though it had no consequences,—but were merely an event terminating in itself. It is, of all others, the best adapted to impress

upon our minds worthy principles of conduct, and to make us in love with the beauty of holiness. But when we go on to contemplate the death of Christ, in a religious point of view, as the great sacrifice and atonement made for sin, without which we could never have had any certain assurance of forgiveness; when, enlarging our views we discover that this wonderful person, was not a man merely, but a divine person, "who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion of a man he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." When, I say, we take this view of the subject, surely the contemplation of that important event, of which the sacrament of bread and wine is the symbol, is calculated to stamp upon our minds impressions of deep regret for our sins, and hearty resolutions of amendment. These sentiments of repentance and purposes of reformation flowing from the sacred source of gratitude, must surely produce the happiest effects upon our lives, if we be at all honest and sincere. Whenever we partake in the holy communion, they will naturally rise in our minds; the occasion will suggest them to us; and it rests with ourselves to encourage and strengthen them, so as that they may not be formed in vain.

The next thing which the words of the text suggest to us, is the second coming of Christ, to which the faithful look forward when all his promises will be completed; and his faithful servants be made happy with him for ever. This is likewise naturally a subject of meditation, when we approach the table of the Lord. Were he still in the dark repositories of death,—and no hope remained of his ever being restored to us, we might remember him with lamentation and weeping, but scarcely with bread and wine. The very form of the sacrament, therefore, justifies St. Paul's explanation of it, that in it we show the Lord's death, in the belief that

he will come again,—and in this consideration many very serious impressions are comprised. For, when he comes again, he will come in the glory of his Father to judge the world. He will no longer travel over an obscure part of the earth, a poor and neglected wanderer; scorned by the wicked, and scarcely acknowledged by the virtuous; suffering all the privations and calamities incident to human life, and finally enduring the punishment of a criminal, but he will appear “sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven;” and every kindred and tongue, and nation, shall be gathered before him. If, therefore, we determine to be good and faithful servants, we are well assured, that our Master has the *power*, as well as the *will*, to reward us; and we have every reason to rejoice in the hope that is set before us. But if, on the other hand, we prove evil, or unprofitable servants, “and say in our hearts, our Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite our fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken,” then we know that “he will come in a day, when we look not for him, and in an hour that we are not aware of, and will appoint us our portion with the hypocrites.”

Such seems, my brethren, to be the kind of reflections, which the sacrament of the Lord’s supper naturally suggests to us; and surely they are very salutary, and well deserving our frequent and serious attention. It, therefore, greatly becomes us to take every proper opportunity of “eating this bread, and drinking this cup,” in order to confirm our faith, and strengthen our good resolutions. “The night,” says the Apostle, “is far spent, and the day is at hand.” Let us steadily keep this principle in view, and it will enable us to bear up under every difficulty, and to resist every temptation. We ought to be thankful, that by the institution of this sacrament, our Saviour has given us a solemn opportunity of frequently calling to mind the great leading maxim of the Christian life, namely, that we are strangers in a foreign land; travellers through a scene of

dangers ; combatants in a serious warfare, that we must steadily fix our eyes on our true country, and through faith and hope bear up against all our corruptions, even unto the end. Let us then be careful not to neglect those opportunities, nor to avoid that gracious invitation which he has given us. We cannot well deserve the name of Christians, if we will not attend at the table of our Master. If a certain superstitious dread, or a sense of unworthiness, deter any who are present, from a participation in this ordinance, I trust what has been said on its nature and institution, will do away such erroneous apprehensions, and that they will cease to plead a want of due preparation, and of a proper frame of mind, if they would view the Lord's Supper as one of those means of grace, which alone can remove the obstacles, and produce the dispositions suitable to its reception.

Should the faith of the communicant be at first but weak, his hope but slender, and his charity languid, yet let him not despair ; let him examine himself, if he sincerely desire to lead a Christian life, and to cherish the devout sentiments naturally accompanying this holy rite, and so let him come boldly to the throne of grace, and "eat of this bread, and drink of this cup." Let him be persuaded, that in so doing, his graces will be increased, his spiritual progress facilitated, and his conquest over the powers of darkness more complete and permanent. His first approach to the heavenly banquet will qualify him for a fuller participation of the second, and every subsequent communion with the saints on earth, will tend to fix those habits of holiness which can alone admit him to the communion of the saints in heaven. All modes of instruction, indeed, such as preaching and reading ; all modes of devotion, if rational and scriptural, tend undoubtedly to obtain divine grace ; and that portion of grace so procured, may, by the mercy of God, be sufficient for us ; but these are all preparatory to the great opportunity afforded in the eucharist, for changing

our hearts entirely, and for receiving an earnest, a pledge, an assurance (under the divine seal) of salvation, or a happy eternity. Faith, hope, and charity, are wonderfully improved and enlivened by the eucharist. We must have faith in order to receive worthily; but to him that hath, *shall be given*, in this holy ordinance, in full and running over measure, and *pressed down*. The actual participation of grace is so pleasant, that it always creates in the soul an appetite for more; the mind experiencing the faith of God's promises in the actual reception of the blessings, is so confirmed in goodness, as to be in little danger of future relapses into any great sins, much less into doubt and infidelity. Hope of everlasting felicity is encouraged in the eucharist, by a foretaste of heavenly happiness enjoyed, in some degree, when the communicant is under the influence of the Divine Spirit, shed upon his heart, while worthily performing this mysterious rite. As for charity, what can more effectually promote it. In the eucharist, we are taught to view Christ as our head, and ourselves, with all Christians, as members of his mystical body. It is the feast of love, and the heart that feeds upon it with a proper relish, cannot retain a particle of envy, revenge, or malevolence. But it must ever be remembered, that in the present case, the Holy Spirit, and not the created elements, is the cause of these holy affections. He can adopt what means he pleases to excite them, as our Saviour cured corporeal blindness by the application of the first materials that occurred, even the moistened clay, however they appeared unequal to the purpose, to minds trained in the schools of human art and philosophy.

Such being the simple nature of this holy ordinance, and such its unquestionable benefits, while, at the same time, a due attention to it is the surest proof of the increase of piety in every Christian congregation, must it not appear a singular phenomenon, and must it not be a subject of humiliating concern to every minister of the Gospel, and every

serious Christian, to see it treated with such general neglect? The man of labour and of business, the man of pleasure, and the man of ambition, seem to take little notice of it,—whether from thoughtlessness, from contempt, or from the multitude of their occupations, is not easy to determine. All that can be said respecting such persons, is, that the Churches are open, and they are invited to enter and receive instruction, that treatises are written, and offered to their perusal, and that if they will not enter the one, nor read the other, on themselves only must fall the evil consequences. In the day of pain, sickness, or some other adversity, they may learn to feel the want of that consolation which naturally arises from a solemn remembrance of the sufferings and death of their Redeemer. At any rate, on the whole, it appears to be certain, from an accurate view of this ordinance, that Christians cannot live consistently with their profession, who wilfully neglect it. Our Church pronounces it to be generally necessary to salvation, and her decision is sanctioned by the doctrine of the most remote and soundest antiquity. In pressing it upon your consciences, I have discharged my duty. The success must be left in his hands, who alone can enlighten the understanding to see the truth, and the will to embrace it. And now, &c. &c.

S E R M O N X I I I .

E T E R N A L D E A T H .

AND THESE SHALL GO AWAY INTO EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT, BUT THE RIGHTEOUS INTO LIFE ETERNAL.—*Matt.* xxv. 46.

MY brethren, it is to one of the most awful truths of our holy religion, that I would now invite your attention, namely, to the solemn consideration of your everlasting destiny,—of the final and irrevocable sentence which the Judge of all mankind will pass upon every man, woman, and child, that has ever lived upon the earth, when as he himself assures us, the wicked “shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”* Now, as we, my brethren, shall constitute a part of that innumerable multitude, which must then stand before the judgment-seat of God, it surely concerns us all, clearly to understand, and feelingly to ponder, what the volume of revelation makes known to us on this all-important subject. We

* “This text is the poor man’s creed. It is his religion. It is to be imprinted upon his memory, and upon his heart. It is what the most simple can understand. It is, when understood and believed, that which excels all the knowledge and learning in the universe. It is what we are to carry about with us in our thoughts, daily remember, and daily reflect upon, not only in Church, not only in our devotions, but in our ordinary occupations, in whatever we intend, plan, or execute. In a word, it is what we are always to remember, that the wicked ‘shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal,’”—*Paley*.

may begin, therefore, by observing, that our Saviour, when upon earth, knowing what a strict account all men must give to him at the last day, and being unwilling that any should be surprised, or taken unawares, took every occasion to forewarn them of it, by entering into very minute particulars concerning it. Among other things, he here tells us, that “when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him,” then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.”* Thus giving us to understand, that although at his first coming into the world to serve it, he appeared in a mean and contemptible situation, yet his second coming, to judge the world, shall be after a different manner, for his appearance will then be all-splendid and glorious,—and that the whole angelic host will attend him, ready to execute all his commands. And accordingly they shall announce his coming by the mighty sound of a trumpet, which all shall hear, who are reposing in their graves, and, in the twinkling of an eye, they shall be raised up again to life: “and they who are then living, shall be *changed* ;” and then he will *sit upon the throne of his glory*,—that is, on his tribunal, or judgment-seat,—whence the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, and mercy, will be displayed to the universe. For then, “before him will be gathered all nations.” Then shall Adam and his whole posterity meet together in one body before Jesus Christ, their Lord and Judge. And “he shall separate them, the one from the other, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.” In other words, the great Shepherd of our souls, will separate the righteous from the wicked; or those who believed in him from those who did not; those who by their gentleness, and meekness, and patience, and innocency, and usefulness, resembled these unoffending animals,—from obstinate, mischievous, and wicked unbelievers, whom he denominates as goats. Such, in fact, as

* Matt. xxv. 31.

“knew not God, and obeyed not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” All wilful infidels, and impious persons, who being of “their father, the Devil, are called by his name;” and, of course, must be essentially distinguished from the followers of “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.” And now the Sovereign and Judge of the universe, “having separated the sheep from the goats, shall set the former on his right hand, and the latter on the left.” So that two distinct divisions will immediately take place of the whole collection of mortals, and the uncertainty that hanged over their fate while living, will be entirely removed. “Here, indeed, all things come alike to all,—there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked,—to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean,—to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not,—as is the good, so is the sinner,—and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.”* But, at the last day, the distinction shall be made most clear and evident, and if it shall please our supreme Judge to place us on his right hand, (which God grant may be the case,) then casting our eyes around us, we shall find ourselves in the company of all the saints and servants of the Most High God, all that lived in his true faith and fear from the beginning to the end of the world, rejoicing and praising Almighty God, and “the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne for ever and ever.” But, alas! if we turn to those who are placed on the left, we shall behold the collected multitude of wilful unbelievers and impenitent sinners, all trembling with unutterable apprehensions of the sentence that must determine their miserable and never-ending fate. But to manifest his mercy, before he executes his justice, the King shall first say to them on his right hand, “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;” and then turning to them on his left

* Eccles. ix 2.

hand, he will say unto them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels." And here we may remark, that while he styles the righteous the *blessed* of his Father, he does not call the reprobate *cursed* of him, because it is not God, but they themselves, who are the authors of this curse. He tells the righteous that the kingdom which they shall inherit, was prepared for them from "the foundation of the world,"—while to the wicked he says, that the fire to which they must go, was *prepared*, not for them, but for the Devil and his angels; signifying, that for these only it was originally designed, and was now become the doom and portion of obstinate sinners merely because they chose to be the dupes and followers of these rebellious spirits. From these two most awful sentences, although there will not possibly be any appeal, and the infinite wisdom, knowledge, justice, and clemency of the Judge, will be clearly perceived and acknowledged by the assembled universe, yet he will declare, at the same time, that he had been graciously pleased to make known, beforehand, the reasons on which they were founded. For, after he shall say to those on his right hand, "come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," he will pronounce immediately the motives of this gracious sentence,—“for I was an hungered,” he will say, “and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” This language, at first, will probably appear somewhat strange to the righteous, most of whom, having never seen him in the flesh, will be at a loss for his meaning, till he informs them, that, “inasmuch as they have done these things unto one of the least of his brethren, they have done it unto him.” In which words, we are solemnly and positively assured, that whatever is done in his name, and for his sake, to any of his faithful people, he will take

it as done unto himself, as it proceeds from ■ pure love and obedience to his laws.

True, indeed, it is, that our Lord, in this passage, instances only one branch of good works, namely, such as tend to alleviate the troubles and calamities of human life; but other acts of virtue will not be excluded from the account. "For God," we are told, "will bring every work into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be evil;" and Christ himself assures us, in another place, "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment." So that by the mention only of works of charity, he meant only by way of example, to declare what special notice will be taken of every branch of our moral conduct, and that he will account strictly with us for it at the last day, whether it be good or evil.

We may observe, further, that although our Lord makes mention of good works only, yet under them he includes a sound and lively faith. Some, indeed, have inferred from this passage, that our faith at the last day will be no subject of inquiry, but our moral conduct only,—not what we had believed, but only how we had lived. But an argument of this kind, is lighter than air. For, in the *first place*, it would prove, that Christ will then take account of no works but such as are there specified, which is not only contrary to the dictates of reason, but to the whole tenor of Scripture, whenever we read of the righteous judgments of God. *Secondly*, from our Saviour's positive declaration, that he "will judge us according to our works," it necessarily follows, that he will examine into our faith, that being eminently one of the good works which he requires us to perform, for nothing is more frequently enjoined us, than to believe in him, and in those truths which he has been pleased to reveal,—so that he who believeth not, must live in a state of sin, and will assuredly be condemned, if he die in this state. Nay, such a person cannot keep any

one of God's commandments,—cannot perform any service acceptable to him,—for “without faith it is impossible to please God,” says his holy Apostle; much less can a wilful unbeliever do any such acts of charity and love, as are mentioned by our Saviour, because we are assured by the same Apostle, that it is “faith that works by love.” So that where there is no faith, there can be no true love or charity; and wheresoever these are found, there must be faith. Christ, therefore, very plainly declares, that they at his right hand had been true believers, by enumerating their acts of charity and love. He tells them, that they had fed, and clothed him, and ministered to his necessities, and then explaining his meaning, he says: “Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Thus clearly intimating that he will accept of no good works, or will consider none as good, but such only as are done to him, and to his brethren, and done by those who acknowledge him, for their Lord and Master, who commands them to act always for his honour and glory, and out of love to his holy name. “Whosoever,” he says, “shall give you a cup of cold water to drink in my name, verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.” Wherefore, the reason which our Saviour here alleges, for pronouncing this most gracious sentence on those at his right hand, is not grounded merely on their acts of benevolence and kindness, which indeed are good works in the common acceptation of the words; but upon their having been performed for his sake, from a principle of faith and humble obedience.

Let us, then, be persuaded, that as there can be no good works without faith, so there can be no saving faith without good works. To omit these, argues an absence of Gospel faith, and the neglect of them will never be admitted as a plea for those who otherwise affect to be sound believers. For, “I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye

took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." As if he had said, "had ye believed my Gospel ye would have obeyed my laws. But, as ye have not done what I positively commanded, therefore, I have allotted your portion among *unbelievers*."

We may observe, further, that on this most awful occasion our Lord makes mention only of sins of omission, and he does it in order to show that although men are apt to call themselves to account for sins of commission only by transgressing some positive law; yet, at the last day, they must also give an account of their sins of omission, whereby they have left undone, what God had positively enjoined. Let none, therefore, however they may flatter themselves, that an exemption from flagrant crimes will render them secure at the great accounting day, presume to overlook the neglect of many important duties, which they owed to God, and their neighbour, and of which a strict account will be taken, and many, it is to be feared, will be condemned for not loving, and fearing, and trusting in God with all their hearts,—for not praying to him and praising his holy name,—for not remembering him at his holy table,—for not feeding and clothing, and relieving the indigent,—for not honouring their parents, instructing their children, and providing for their families,—for not improving their talents to the advantage of society, and promotion of godliness,—for cumbering the ground like sapless trunks, instead of bearing the fruits of righteousness and truth. For these things God will bring many into judgment, and say unto them, "depart from me, I know you not."

And now, my brethren, you perhaps will expect that the consequences of the final judgment should be offered to your consideration, and that you should be called upon to accompany in your imagination, the disembodied spirits of the whole human race, either into the paradise of God, or into the dismal abodes of endless misery and despair. But

as we are assured, "that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God has prepared for those who love him," and as the specific nature of the future torments of the wicked is equally concealed from our knowledge, or shadowed out only under the most terrific images and figures, it might appear like presumption to enter further on these sublime and awful subjects, than we are authorized by the light of revelation. From this, however, we know, "that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal;" that "at the right hand of God there is pleasure for ever more," a fulness of joy without any alloy of sorrow and sighing, a plenitude of bliss, which shall be uninterrupted and eternal: and from this we know, likewise, that the wicked are to go into outer darkness; there is to be weeping and gnashing of teeth; they are to depart into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched; there shall they drink of the wrath of God, poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. Now, whatever there may be of figure in some of these expressions, this much, however, they certainly import, that the future state of the wicked will be a state of exquisite torment, both of body and mind,—of torments not only intense in degree, but incapable of intermission, alleviation, or end—a condition of unmixed and perfect evil, not less deprived of future hope than of present enjoyment. It is amazing, my brethren, that promises and dangers so strongly set forth in holy Scripture, should be ever disregarded by any description of mortals. Might it not be expected that the candidates for worldly fame, whose talents and sagacity give countenance to their ambition, who are endowed with a capacity of weighing distant consequences, and of turning every thing, by deep policy and forecast, to their advantage; might it not, I say, be expected that this sagacity of understanding would restrain them from the des-

perate folly of sacrificing an unfading crown for any glory that must shortly pass away? Again, with regard to an avaricious and money-getting man, who is generally a person of great discretion, might we not expect that he would be exact in counting his gains, and the last to barter possessions, which he might hold for ever, for wealth that shall flee from him, and shall not profit him in the day of wrath. And as for those servants of sin, the effeminate children of sensual pleasure, might we not expect, that they, of all persons, would want sufficient firmness to brave the most threatening danger of exposing themselves to everlasting torture? Yet so it is,—the ambitious pursues a conduct that must end in shame, the miser, to be rich *now*, makes himself poor for ever, and the tender, delicate, voluptuary, shrinks not at the thought of endless burnings. These things, my brethren, could not be, but for one of these two reasons,—either that there is some lurking incredulity in men,—“an evil heart of unbelief,” that admits not the Gospel doctrines of rewards and punishments, in their full extent, or that their imaginations set the attractions of the one, and the danger of the other, at too great a distance. With respect to the latter, this is too generally the case; but we must remember, that the Scriptures are not more explicit in the threatenings of wrath upon the impenitent, than in general assertions of God’s forbearance and mercy. These assertions are confirmed by the voice of nature, which loudly proclaims the goodness, as well as the power of the universal Lord. Man, indeed, is frail and imperfect in his original constitution. *This*, too, is the doctrine of the Scriptures, and every man’s experience unhappily confirms it. Human life, by the appointment of Providence, is short. “He hath made our days, as it were, a span long!” “Is it then to be supposed, that this good, this merciful, this long-suffering God, should doom his frail imperfect creature, man, to endless punishment, for the *follies*—call them, if you please, the crimes of a short life?

Is *he* injured by our *crimes*, that he should seek this vast revenge, or does he delight in groans and lamentations? Besides, what revelation declares of the future condition of the wicked, is prophecy; and prophecy, we know, deals in poetical and exaggerated expressions." Such, perhaps, is the language which the sinner holds within himself, when he is warned of the wrath to come, and such language he is taught to hold, in the writings and sermons of some modern sectaries. He is taught that the punishment threatened, is far more severe than will be executed; he is told that the words which, in their literal meaning, denote endless duration, are, upon many occasions, in Scripture, as in common speech, used figuratively, to express very long, but yet definite periods of time. These notions, I say, are inculcated in the writings, not of infidels only, but of some who, with all their errors, may be numbered among the friends and advocates of virtue and religion. But, while we willingly bear witness to their worth, we must not the less strenuously resist their dangerous innovations, and the violence which they seem to offer to the most explicit declarations of Scripture, until they can make it appear, that the eternity of punishment is inconsistent with God's natural perfections, which no created intellect can fathom, or with his relative perfections,—with those attributes which are displayed in his dealings with the rational part of his creation;—until they can determine in what proportion the attributes of justice and mercy, forbearance and severity, ought to be mingled together in the character of the supreme governor of the universe. Moreover, who can prove that eternal punishment is inconsistent with the schemes of God's moral government, unless he is able to define its motives and its extent,—to point out its various parts, with their mutual relations and dependencies? Is it not, then, the part of a wise and prudent man, to conclude in conformity with very strong and explicit declarations of Scripture, that since no proof can be deduced, from any natural

knowledge that we have of God, that the scheme of eternal punishment is unworthy of the divine character—since there is no proof that it is inconsistent either with the natural perfections of God, or with his relative attributes—since it may be necessary to the ends of his government, is it not, I say, our bounden duty and manifest interest, not to narrow, qualify, or extenuate these threatenings of holy writ? The original frailty of human nature, and the providential shortness of human life, are alleged to no purpose in this argument; for eternal punishment is not announced against the frail, but against the hardened and the perverse; and life is to be esteemed long, or short, not from any proportion it may bear to eternity, (which would, indeed, be none at all, were it protracted to ten thousand times its ordinary length) but according as its duration may be greater, or less than may be just sufficient for the purposes of such a state, as our present life is, of discipline and probation. There must be a certain length of time, the precise measure of which can be known only to God, within which the promises and the threatenings of the Gospel, joined with the experience which every man's life affords of God's power and providence of the instability and vanity of all worldly enjoyments,—there must, I say, in the nature of things, be a certain measure of time, in which, if at all, this state of experience, joined with future hopes and fears, must produce certain degrees of improvement in moral wisdom and religious habits. If in all that time no effect is wrought, the impediment can only have arisen from incurable self-love and obstinacy. If the ordinary period of life be more than is precisely sufficient for this trial, and cultivation of the religious character, those persons, who shall prove incorrigibly bad, will have no claim upon the justice or the goodness of God, to abridge the time of their existence in misery, so as to make it bear some proportion to the short period of their wicked lives. Qualities are not to be measured by duration; they bear no more relation to it than

they do to space. The hatefulnes of sin is seated in itself, in its own internal quality of evil; and by *that* its ill deservings are to be measured—not by the narrowness of the limits, either of time or place, within which the good providence of God has confined its power of doing mischief.

If, on any ground, it were safe to indulge a hope, that the sufferings of the wicked may have an end, it would be upon the principle adopted by some few of the ancient fathers, and also by some modern writers of eminence and piety, that the actual endurance of punishment in the next life, will produce effects, to which the dread of it had been insufficient, and end, after a long course of years, in the reformation of the worst offenders. But the principle, that this effect is possible,—that the human heart may be reclaimed by force, is at best precarious; so that the only safe principle of human conduct is, to abide by the literal declaration of the Scriptures, and believe that unrepented sin will suffer endless punishment hereafter. But, perhaps, after all, the distance at which imagination sets the prospect of future rewards and punishments, has a more general influence in diminishing the effect of God's merciful warnings, than any sceptical doubts about the intensity or the duration of the sufferings of the wicked. The Spirit of God means to waken us from this delusion, when he tells us, by the Apostles, and holy men of old, that “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” He means by these declarations, to remind every man, that his particular doom is near: for, whatever may be the time appointed in the secret counsels of God, for “that great and terrible day, when the heavens and the earth shall flee from the face of him, who shall be seated on the throne, and their place shall be no more found.” Whatever may be the destined period of this public catastrophe, the end of the world, with respect to every individual, takes place at the conclusion of his own life. In the grave there will be no repentance; no virtues can be acquired,—no evil habits thrown off. With *that*

character, whether of virtue or of vice, in which men leave the world, in *that* must they appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and at that moment their future condition is irreversibly determined. In this sense, therefore, to every one here present, “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh”—“the Judge is at the door.”—“Let us then watch and pray”—watch over ourselves, and pray for the succours of God’s grace, that we may be able to stand before the Son of man. Nor shall vigilance and prayer be ineffectual. On the incorrigible and perverse,—on those who mock at God’s threatenings, and reject his promises—on those only the severity of his wrath will fall. But, to those who lay these warnings seriously to heart,—who dread the pollutions of the world, and flee from sin, as from a serpent,—who fear God’s displeasure more than death, and seek his favour more than life,—though much frailty will adhere to them to the last, yet these are the objects of the Father’s mercy,—of the Redeemer’s love. For these he died, for these he pleads,—these he supports and strengthens, by his Spirit, and these he will lead with him triumphant to the mansions of glory, when sin and death shall be cast into the lake of fire. And now, &c. &c.

SERMON XIV.

PRAYER.

LET US COME BOLDLY UNTO THE THRONE OF GRACE, THAT WE MAY OBTAIN MERCY, AND FIND GRACE TO HELP IN TIME OF NEED.

Heb. iv. 16.

PRAYER is an exercise of such primary importance ; it is such an honour, such a privilege, such ■ means of sanctifying, relieving, and enriching the soul, that he who teaches us to pray, is our best friend ; and there is nothing we should more highly prize than those instructions which are designed to regulate and encourage our addresses to God. The design of the Apostle, in the words of the text, is to convey the plainest and most useful instructions upon this subject, and therefore it is well deserving our most serious attention. He tells us of *a throne of grace*, and informs us in what *manner*, and *for what purpose*, we should approach it. “ Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” The language is metaphorical. When God enacts laws, he may be said to sit on a throne of legislation : when he administers these laws, he is on a throne of government : when he tries his creatures by these laws, he is on a throne of judgment : and when he receives petitions and dispenses favours, he is represented as seated on *a throne of grace*. The idea of ■ throne inspires awe, bordering upon terror. It repels, rather than invites. Few persons could approach it without fear and trembling. But

what is the throne of an earthly monarch, the greatest earthly monarch that ever swayed a sceptre? The God whom we address, is the "King of kings, and Lord of lords." In his eye the mightiest conqueror is no more than a worm that creeps upon the ground; yea, "all nations before him are as nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. Heaven is his throne," and the earth is *only* "*his footstool.*" How can we enter his presence, or approach his infinite majesty? The answer is, because, blessed be his name, he fills the *mercy seat*; he is on a *throne of grace*; and we are allowed, and even permitted, to come *boldly* to it.

I. But, it is necessary, in the first place, for us to know what this *boldness* is; and we may begin by observing that it is something very different from audacity, rudeness, or unbecoming familiarity. We have sometimes heard persons address Almighty God in a manner and style, which they would not dare to use—I will not say, in speaking to a superior, but even to a fellow-creature of their own rank and station in life. Such persons would do well to compare Scripture with Scripture, before they presume to apologize, from the words of the text, for their indigested and vulgar effusions. What, in fact, is the language of the Bible in other places? "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom, which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." Such persons would also do well to remember the nature of the business in which they are engaged: for, if we are imploring *mercy* and *grace*, common sense will tell us, that the *boldness* mentioned in the text, can be only the boldness of a penitent, and a sup-

pliant. Now, nothing can be plainer, than that an encouragement to beg can never be extended to a license to offend. Prayer and insolence ill accord together. This *boldness*, then, arises from nothing in ourselves, but purely from the goodness of the being whom we address ; and it consists, principally, in a persuasion that we are freely authorized to come, and may confidently hope to succeed. My brethren, what a change is made in the view and feelings of a person, by conviction of sin ! Sin was once nothing, or a mere trifle in his view, but now awakened to consider, and enlightened to perceive its nature and consequences, he feels it to be the greatest of evils. Formerly he could not be induced to fear ; at present he can scarcely be excited to hope. Convinced of his demerits, and framing his judgment under the influence of human and guilty feelings, he experiences a difficulty in believing that God will receive him. But, till he *does* believe this, he will not, he cannot repair to him, as he ought. God has, therefore, made provision to excite and sustain the confidence of self-condemned sinners. He has revealed himself, not as implacable, but as full of pity and compassion, “ as the Lord God, gracious and merciful.” “ He has commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Here the conclusion is not more justly drawn, than it is infinitely encouraging : “ He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also, freely give us all things ? Surely he hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrow, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.” His blood “ cleanseth us from all sin. He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. *He* suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God.” I mention this the more fully, because we *come unto God by him* : and in proportion of our knowledge of the Mediator, and our reliance upon him, will be our encouragement and consolation in duty. It is here

that our hopes take their rise : it is here that we are filled with all joy and peace in believing. "In whom," speaking of Christ, says the Apostle, "we have boldness, and access with confidence, by the faith of him." And again, "having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh ; and having an high-priest over the house of God ; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." We have also *exceeding great and precious promises*,—such as these,—“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and unto our God, and he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts, than your thoughts.”

To illustrate these promises, and to banish every apprehension springing from unworthiness and guilt that might prevent our application to him, he has been pleased to add a succession of examples. Some of these are derived from characters the most vile ; but vile as they once were, “they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Among men, the chief offenders are always made examples of justice—but here they have frequently been made the examples of mercy. Civil governors are afraid to pardon the most criminal, lest they should encourage offences ; but pardoned sinners here are designed to be precedents. “For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffer-

ing, as a pattern to them that should believe on him, to life everlasting." And by similar instances he has said, to every sinner, "learn that neither the number, nor the heinousness of your sins, shall destroy you, if you are willing to obtain salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ." In process of time, moreover, the believer's own experience will greatly augment his confidence. For, although he has no more dependence upon himself than he once had, yet he learns to trust more simply and firmly in him who has never turned *away his prayer*, but has been *a very present help in every time of trouble*. The boldness spoken of in the text, takes in not only a confidence of success, but also "a holy liberty in our addresses to him, expressive of intimacy and privilege." Are we Christians? We come not, then, as strangers and foreigners, but as fellow-citizens with the saints, and of *the household of God*. We have received not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the *spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!* Other monarchs can be approached only at certain seasons; and in certain cases; and with certain formalities. But you may call upon him *at all times*, and in *all circumstances*. You may "in every thing make known your requests unto God." You may tell him of all that perplexes, all that alarms, all that distresses you. He deems nothing too trifling to be spread before him. You may tell him what you can tell no earthly friend. Neither are you required to keep at a distance, but allowed to come even to his seat—to order your cause before him—to put him in remembrance—to plead with him—to persevere, and not let him go, except he bless you.

II. Having considered in *what manner* we are to come to the throne of grace, let us observe, in the next place, for *what purposes* we are to approach this tribunal of mercy. These are explicitly set down in the text. They are to *obtain mercy*, and to *find grace*. Now, these blessings are wisely connected together by the Apostle, because many

deluded persons have been found, who have wished to separate them. They would be saved from the punishment of sin, but not from sin itself. They wish to be pardoned, but not renewed. They would have mercy, but not grace. But let not such persons be thus miserably deceived. For nothing is more certain, than that God sanctifies those whom he forgives, and prepares them for his service. Both these blessings are equally important and necessary to our salvation, and both, of course, must be the subjects of our prayers. First, then, let us pray for *mercy*. And let us pray for it like persons who know they greatly need it. What says the voice of conscience to all men? You are verily guilty. You stand charged with innumerable transgressions, many of which are attended with circumstances of peculiar aggravation; until these are pardoned, you are in a state of condemnation: and O! what a doom is that, which is denounced upon you by the law, which you have broken? Think of "the wrath of God:" think of "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is never quenched. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And you are continually liable to the execution of this sentence. You *must* die soon, and you *may* die very soon; and then it will be too late to cry for mercy. Oh, let us then be prevailed upon to seek it immediately, and earnestly; to say from our hearts, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out all my transgressions." And, let us reflect, moreover, that we shall stand in need of the exercise of this mercy, on the part of God, as long as we continue in the body. Fresh guilt is frequently contracted; our most holy things are continually vitiated. Who, in fact, can say, "I have made my heart clean; I am pure from my sin?" As eminent a saint as modern times have seen, Archbishop Usher, was often heard to say, that he hoped to die with the language of the publican in his mouth; and his biographer tells us, his wish was fulfilled. He

expired saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." What an exalted character is given us, by the Apostle, of his disciple Onesiphorus! And yet, he says, "The Lord grant unto him that he may find"—not justice, but "mercy of the Lord, in that day." He would need mercy till then, and *then* he would need it more than ever. And, indeed, when we all come to appear before his righteous tribunal, to have our actions and our motives tried,—“should he mark iniquity, who could stand?” Let us therefore, say with Job, “though I were righteous, yet would I not answer him, but I would make supplication to my Judge.”

Secondly, let us pray for “grace to help in time of *need*.” But is not every day of our lives a *time of need with us*? Is there a moment in our existence, in which we can subsist independently of Divine grace? No, there surely is not. We need this grace to mortify our corruptions,—to sanctify our affections,—to resist temptations,—to overcome the world. It is Divine grace alone that can enable us to pursue our journey with safety,—to run our race,—to accomplish our warfare,—to *endure to the end*. We cannot pray, or sing praises to our God, or read, or hear, with a proper spirit, without this heavenly influence *helping our infirmities*. “We cannot,” says Bishop Hopkins, “stand one moment longer than God upholds us, or walk one step further than God leads us.” Wherefore, for that which is *constantly* necessary, the Apostle teaches us *constantly* to pray.

But there are some seasons, some occasions, in which we peculiarly require the aid of Divine grace. Two or three of these it may be proper to mention. *Prosperity* is a time of need. Few know *how to abound*. It is no easy thing to be *full*, and not deny God,—not to deny, at least in practice, that in *Him we live, and move, and have our being*,—not to deny him by living without God in the world,—not to deny him, by placing our sovereign happiness in many things altogether foreign to his service,—not to deny him, by substituting worldly decencies for the rules of the Gos-

pel,—the opinions of men for the sanctions of religion. Worldly fame, and affluence, have often had a baneful effect on the minds of good men,—have attached them too strongly to earth, and slackened their diligence in seeking a better, even a heavenly country. They have felt less dependence upon God, and kept up less communion with him. They have grown high-minded and illiberal, and exhibited far less of the Christian character in their advancement than in their poverty. They have fatally experienced the impossibility of serving masters so opposite as God and Mammon. They have fondly imagined, that with worldly prosperity comes wisdom and knowledge, and are led to cherish an idea of self-importance, and progress in virtue, which is derived solely from the flattery of interested dependents. They become giddy, from the eminence to which they have ascended, and are apt to regard themselves as privileged mortals, exempted from the common weaknesses and casualties of human nature. Many have dropt and lost their religion in passing from a cottage to a mansion. “The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.” It stimulates their slender powers to undertake what is beyond their reach, and exposes them to ruin and disgrace, from which a happy mediocrity would have preserved them. Let us, therefore, be wise, and learn to feel and appreciate the prayer of Agur : “Poverty, or riches, give me not, O Lord.” Let us remember, that the wisdom, which alone can preserve us, consists in our fearing always,—in a diffidence of ourselves,—in a deep conviction of the insufficiency of any earthly glory or pre-eminence to stamp the smallest moral excellency upon the soul,—in praying with sincerity, “hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.” He indeed can keep us from falling, when placed upon the most giddy pinnacle of preferment, when walking even in the most slippery places. In these circumstances it was, in situations equally high and dangerous, that he guarded Joseph and Daniel, and many other of his servants,—pre-

serving them from that undue attachment to earthly enjoyments, and from that fatal indifference to such as are spiritual, which worldly prosperity is so apt to occasion.

Affliction, moreover, is a time of need. It matters not from what quarter the trouble springs; certain we are, that it *comes not out of the dust*, or is not accidental; and, equally certain, that it is a *season of trial*, out of which it is the Christian's duty to *come forth as gold*. In these situations he not only wants support and comfort, so that he may not *faint*, but he wants strength and preservation, so that he may not *sin*. He is concerned to be secured from impatience, from distrust of Providence, from quarrelling with the instruments of God's moral government. He wishes to glorify God in the fires; and to derive advantage from his crosses, so as to be able to say, "It is good for me *that I have been afflicted*." He feels the power of temptation, but sees not a way to escape. He summons to his assistance all the arguments and motives which worldly wisdom suggests, but finds them to be ineffectual. He looks into his own heart for auxiliaries to support him in the day of trouble; but discovers there many enemies to his peace, unreasonable desires, perverse designs, and unruly affections. To a mind disturbed with anguish,—to an eye dimmed with tears,—all worldly consolations appear cold and insipid,—nay, the whole face of nature is one uninteresting gloom. The sufferer seeks in vain for a ray of consolation,—till, at last, he goes *boldly to the throne of grace,—there to find grace to help him in time of need*. He goes boldly, I say, *to the throne of grace*. He approaches confidently the Lamb that sitteth on this throne, "ever making intercession for him at the right hand of the Eternal." Here only he hopes *to find grace to help in time of need*. As a believer in revelation, he is consoled amidst his afflictions, whether of private or public nature, by the assurance, that not only this train of evils will be converted into good in the effect, but the evil itself in this world, will at a future period nearly

cease to exist. He is persuaded, that the Great Spirit who presides over this mysterious scene has yet an energy of operation in reserve to be unfolded on the earth, such as its inhabitants have never, except in a few momentary glimpses, beheld,—and that when his kingdom comes, those powers will be manifested, to command the chaos of turbulent and malignant elements into a new moral world. My brethren, the reason why, in the passage before us, and so many others of Holy Scripture, we are commanded to confess our implicit dependence upon God, is that natural propensity in man to attach an excessive importance to human agency in all the events and circumstances of life ; a propensity to transform a creature of his own species, by a sympathetic pride, into a sort of deity before him. To counteract this senseless and wicked propensity, the whole tenor of revelation, and the peculiar spirit of Christianity, goes to teach us to withdraw our dependence and confidence from all subordinate agents, and habitually to regard the Supreme Being as the only power in the universe, willing and able to *help us in time of need*. Under every painful dispensation, therefore, the believing Christian seeks the Lord with confidence, and what the Lord said to St. Paul, he may apply unto himself: “ My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

But the principal season, or *time of need*, is *death*. And it is one that is unavoidable. Other times of need *may* come, but this *will* come. It is, indeed, the last time of need, but it is also the greatest. It is new and untried. It settles every thing for ever. It is awful to let go our hold on earth, to give up the soul into the hand of God, and enter eternity. The enemy also now uses all his force to perplex and distress us ; for there are two seasons in which he is peculiarly busy,—when we are coming to Christ for grace,—and when we are going to him for glory. Unbelievers, indeed, may endeavour to banish this subject from

their minds, but the Christian *must* think of it. And *he* will be concerned to die *safely*, as to consequences,—*honourably*, as to religion,—*comfortably*, as to himself,—and *usefully* as to others. Now, in this all-important situation, what can be done without grace to help,—to help in this time of need? If many Christians, who are cast down at this season, were only assured that their sun would set without a cloud, they would be filled with strong consolation, bear cheerfully their trials, and look forward to futurity with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Well, the grace of God *can* do all this, and *has* done it for many, and even for many who were “once walking mournfully before the Lord.” When the time of need came, it brought Divine grace along with it,—suffering grace for a suffering hour, and dying grace for a dying hour. Wherefore, if this be our aim, these our dispositions in prayer,—if we are to pray, *that we may obtain mercy*, and *find grace, to help in time of need*, does it not follow, as a fair inference from the subject, that a prayerless person will be found destitute both of God’s mercy and grace?

This is an awful truth, and it leads me, before I conclude, seriously to exhort all who hear me, to ask themselves, candidly,—*First*, whether they have ever come to this throne of grace? Whether they have ever prayed with the spirit, and in the manner which this holy exercise requires? Perhaps they have sometimes dragged through this duty as a task,—but did they ever feel it to be their privilege, and their pleasure? Perhaps they have engaged in it occasionally,—but has it been their habitual employment? Have they prayed always as the Apostle enjoins, by asking a blessing upon undertaking the common duties and avocations of life, by performing them as under the eye of Omniscience, and concluding them with thanksgiving? Perhaps they have called upon God in the hour of sickness and danger,—but as health returned, have they not dropped the

exercise of prayer by little and little, till they have come to live entirely without in the world? They have frequently attended public worship,—but do they pray much or ever in their closets? Or, in the duties of their calling, do they send up many a devout aspiration to heaven, saying, “Lord, help me.” They may be fond of hearing sermons,—but while they so often hear from God, does God ever hear from them?

I would ask those who hear me, in the *second* place, if they design to come to the throne of grace? Or have they resolved to *restrain prayer before God*? Do they imagine they can acquire these blessings any other way than by prayer? This, let them be assured, is impossible. “For of all these things,” says the Lord, “I will be inquired of. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Or do they, who seldom or never pray, conceive these blessings below their notice, and unworthy their pursuit? Alas! strange as it may appear, I suspect that this is the case. Present concerns absorb all our faculties. We resort to the means of relief that lie within the range of our senses, and seldom invoke the invisible arm which alone can save us. The conveniences and comforts of time obliterate our concern for those of eternity. The person who *comes not to the throne of grace*, is not prepared duly to estimate the advantages to be found there. He feels not his need of mercy and grace, otherwise surely he would deem them worth asking for. If you could gain a fortune by prayer, would you not pray? Or health, would you not pray? And yet, what are these to mercy and grace? These comprise every other blessing, and nothing else can be a blessing without them. Or do any imagine that these blessings are not to be obtained? My brethren, in the whole system of revelation, there is no ground for such despair. He “waiteth to be gracious, and is exalted to have mercy. Come,” says he, “for all things are now

ready." None are excluded,—all are welcome. If, however, one class of petitioners could be more welcome and successful than another, it would be that of youth. I will conclude, therefore, by leaving on their minds, the declaration uttered by Infinite Wisdom itself: "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." And now, to God the Father, &c. &c. &c.

S E R M O N X V .

F A M I L Y P R A Y E R .

FOR I KNOW HIM, THAT HE WILL COMMAND HIS CHILDREN, AND HIS HOUSEHOLD AFTER HIM, AND THEY SHALL KEEP THE WAY OF THE LORD, TO DO JUSTICE AND JUDGMENT, THAT THE LORD MAY BRING UPON ABRAHAM THAT WHICH HE HATH SPOKEN TO HIM.—*Gen. xviii. 19.*

THIS encomium, pronounced by the Almighty himself, upon faithful Abraham, shows that true piety is a principle, which always leads a man to honour God in every thing. God knew that this principle was active and vigorous in the heart of the holy patriarch, and therefore pronounces, that it would influence his conduct at home and abroad, upon common, as well as upon extraordinary occasions. It is this principle which led holy Abraham to exercise a religious care over his family, and must induce every Christian to follow his illustrious example. And in this part of his conduct he shows not only the devout state of his affections, but likewise the soundness of his judgment. Every wise man must see the necessity of establishing some plan of domestic government, in order to preserve his family from becoming a scene of confusion and misery. Now, by what expedient can a Christian better accomplish this purpose, than by endeavouring that every member of it may feel the force of those principles, by which he himself strives to become holy and happy? It is easy to imagine how persons of true piety will fill up this outline in the various occupations of their lives. There may be some shades of differ-

ence in the performance of their several duties : but there is one ancient and godly custom, which, it is probable, will be deemed very important in the regulations of their families, namely, the daily performance of religious worship ; and to this subject I now solicit your attention.

The arguments in support of family religion, lie within a very small compass, and are, at the same time, so obvious to a serious Christian, that it may seem almost unnecessary to insist long upon them. It is scarcely possible that persons conversant with the holy Scriptures, and truly concerned for the temporal and eternal interests of those, who are under their care, can entertain a doubt of the duty of worshipping God in their families. With such persons, the commendations bestowed on Abraham, in the text, will be regarded in the light of an express injunction. They will conceive it to be enjoined upon them “ to command their children, and their household after them, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment.” And, what in fact, can appear more reasonable, than that God should be honoured in that community, which derives all its present comforts, and future expectations, from him ? In every family, there are many mercies, of which all the members equally partake. How fit and becoming a thing is it, then, that all the members should join in acts of devout homage to their common protector and benefactor ? Moreover, the assembling every day to worship the Supreme Being, has a powerful tendency to produce the happiest effects in forming the conduct of children and domestics. To recall the attention of a family frequently to God, must tend to impress all its members with an idea of his authority, and their dependence upon his providence. It holds out religion to them as a duty, not of occasional, but of daily obligation. The constant reading of the holy Scriptures, the frequent imploring of pardon for sin, and petitioning for grace to act as becomes Christians, towards God, and one another, imperceptibly convey into their

minds a knowledge of all their religious and social obligations. On the other hand, in families where instruction is never heard, nor any act of devotion performed, a deplorable ignorance of moral obligation generally prevails. Hence, undoubtedly, arise many of the complaints which are heard of the behaviour of servants, when little or no pains are taken to teach them their duty. How unlikely is it, that steady and cheerful obedience should be rendered to man, where the fear of God is not inculcated either by precept or example. If, therefore, the heads of families would consult merely their own comfort and interest, the best course for them to pursue, would be to tread in the steps of those godly persons, whose houses were consecrated by the daily performance of family worship; and thus a remedy would probably be found against that careless, idle, and faithless conduct, of many domestics, which so frequently disturb the peace and harmony of social life. Of these evils, no radical cure can reasonably be expected, until the almost exploded piety of former times is revived, by making religious instruction and worship, a stated observance in our families.

But there is another consideration, which ought to have great weight with every generous mind. The relation in which every person stands to society at large, imposes on him a solemn obligation to employ the means which tend to promote the religious principle among mankind. Families are the nurseries of the state. Parents, magistrates, and ministers of religion, were once children in a family, and have, probably, brought with them into their important stations, a strong tincture of the habits which prevailed in the society of their tender years. We retain the impressions which we receive in early life; and if they be not favourable to virtue, their corrupt influence may readily be traced in the actions of a riper period. Licentious children become ungovernable men. From not being habituated to reverence God, and eternal things, when

children, men are frequently found to grow up with a heathenish insensibility in matters of religion,—an insensibility which never forsakes them, even amidst the highest intellectual improvements. And to such persons, when any moral trust is committed, it is easy to conjecture how it will be discharged. A man who is actuated with truly Christian principles, feels a benevolent concern for the interest of society, and will, of course, have this object in view in the management of those who are committed to his care. He will seriously endeavour to send them forth into the world, provided and fortified by principles of conduct, which may enable them to communicate their influence to the great body of society, and are calculated to diminish, and not to augment, the too great evils that prevail in the world. Now, if any person can devise a better manner of rendering such service to mankind, than by the regular practice of religious instruction and worship, in his family, let him, for the benefit of society, make it known to the world; for it would assuredly be a very valuable discovery.

Some, perhaps, may excuse themselves from the duty here recommended, by saying, that they are not inattentive to the moral and religious improvement of their families; that they never omit public worship on Sundays, and enjoin the same duty on their children and domestics, and this they conceive to be sufficient for imparting the knowledge of their obligations, and enforcing their practice. But is no advantage to be expected from the daily performance of something that tends to promote the best interests of our fellow-creatures? Nay, is not this indispensably necessary? A considerable interval occurs between one Sunday and another,—an interval sufficiently long to admit the operation of many and great temptations upon our vitiated nature. And shall we suffer the most incautious, and inexperienced part of our family, to pass all this time without performing any exercises, that tend to counteract the continual presence and influence of evil? But without taking

into our account the dangerous influence to which our domestics are exposed, we should remember, that the longer the interval is, which occurs between the seasons of instruction, the more likely we are to lose its salutary impression. It is, therefore, greatly to be wished, that some method could be adopted to prevent this loss. Now, family worship alone can answer this purpose; for it recalls our minds to God; it serves to renew the impression of those great truths, which were set before us in public worship, but which, however important, we are too prone to forget,—for there is an error too generally prevailing in the world, that all the ends of public prayer and instruction, are sufficiently answered by exercises performed within the walls of the Church: whereas the great business is only *begun* there, but must be *finished* at home. The work of the parochial instructor must pass from his hands into those of the several *family instructors*. Happy, indeed, are they, who enjoy the weekly privilege of hearing God's word and faithful exhortations, to the performance of their Christian duties. "Nothing that is profitable, will be kept back from them," by a conscientious minister. He will not fail to set before them all those blessed truths, which relate to the redemption of mankind. He will preach Christ, and him crucified. He will endeavour to excite them to a becoming regard to these truths. Anxious to see his people partakers of the comforts of Christianity, he will not merely urge them in a general way, to the practice of its duties, but will point out to them the peculiar obligations of their several states and relations in life. Much farther than this, his endeavours cannot reach; yet still the work must proceed, or the labour bestowed on it, will probably be lost. There is great reason to apprehend, that although his discourses may have produced very serious impressions when delivered, yet the feelings then excited, will die away unless cherished by some further application of truth to the mind. The seed which has been sown must not be left to itself; it

must be watched, and watered, in order to bring forth any valuable fruit. Now, to these things, the individuals who hear public preaching, must attend for themselves; and especially the heads of families, for the improvement of those who are committed to their care. He, therefore, who on Christian principles endeavours to provide for his own household, will follow the sower, not only with his private prayers, but with such family exercises as tend to guard and cherish the precious seed that has been sown. Where these duties are wisely and diligently performed, the public instructor will rejoice at seeing the fruit of his labour. Whereas little fruit, it is to be feared, will he be likely to discover among those families, in which the domestics neither hear, nor see any thing that is calculated to remind them of the public worship, and the instructions which they then received. They will be tempted to think, (if they think at all on the subject,) that religion consists only in going to Church, as they see nothing more of it in the families where they live. Young and uneducated persons are influenced by what is always addressing itself to their minds. They judge of things, not from what one man says, one day in the week, but from what every person is saying every day. The customs, the habits of a family, are the things that form their opinions and their character: and if among these there be no act, which is intended to do honour to religion, surely nothing is done to promote the design of public instruction; but much, it is to be feared, which will defeat that design, though, probably, not intended to do so. It is by neglecting to inforce public by private instruction, that among other causes, a standing ministry in the Church does not produce all the good for which it was ordained. The influence of a public instructor is often very limited; and in estimating the useful tendency of his office, the neglect of those should be taken into the account, who should resume the duty, for which *he* is set apart, at that point, beyond which he cannot proceed. To labour to

induce all heads of families to carry the work of instruction into their domestic circles, is evidently the duty of all Christian ministers. It is not a crowded auditory that should satisfy them. They will sigh over the multitudes whom they view from the pulpit, if they know that although they seem to hang upon his lips, there is at home no altar, no priest, no sacrifice, nor one true sign of genuine piety, to be found. They estimate their usefulness in their pastoral character, not merely by the number of their hearers, but by the practical effect of their discourses. And among other inquiries, with a view of ascertaining this effect, they endeavour to know whether there be any family religion among them. When they see religion in the houses of their hearers, they have reason to conclude that it has properly affected their hearts; and that not only they, but their *children after them*, may partake of the benefit of their ministerial labours. Such being the importance of family religion, it is hoped that no person, who has any just pretensions to piety, will be deterred from the duty which he owes to his domestics, by any ridicule he may incur by reviving that ancient and godly custom of our forefathers. We should, I say, stand to meet with Christian firmness, that overbearing spirit of banter, which too frequently attempts to discountenance family devotion. Let us arm ourselves against it, by considering, that it is scarcely possible to be thus employed, and at the same time to escape every idle insinuation, but that it is highly inglorious in such a good cause to surrender to such an ignoble antagonist. Practices the most solemn and approved, may be subjects of ridicule to some; but let us reflect how they are regarded by others. Can, indeed, any sight be more interesting, than to see a pious man collect his family around him, and kneeling down with them, thankfully acknowledge the blessings, which *he* and *they* have received, and humbly implore the continuance of the divine mercy? This, however it may be misrepresented by vain and thoughtless per-

sons, is, without doubt, in the eye of God and his angels, a dignified spectacle.

I. We will now proceed to offer a few hints to those who are disposed and resolved to adopt the practice of family worship. In the first place, let the heads of families remember, that the more pleasantly their devotions are conducted, the more certain will be their influence, provided, always, that they never sink to a level with unmeaning observance. To prevent irksomeness, long services should be avoided. In the discharge of so sacred a duty as that of family worship, every thing is of importance. The manner, therefore, of conducting it, deserves some consideration. Let it be free from such habits as indicate any want of reverence, such as leave a repulsive impression on the minds of those who join in the worship. Delivery ought to be particularly attended to. If it be slovenly, vociferous, precipitate or whining, it ill befits the act either of administering religious instruction, or presenting the sacrifice of prayer. Let him who leads family worship, be concerned to render it both solemn and engaging. To the due performance of all the duties, which it is intended at present to enforce, there is one thing which I conceive to be very essential,—it is, that the master of a family consider himself as God's minister, respecting his own household. This idea should be habitually cherished, with earnest prayer, that he may, with all humility, act up to this character. This idea will dispose him to take advantage of every circumstance that occurs in his family, to make salutary impressions on their minds. Such an opportunity is afforded by a casualty, a remarkable escape from some impending evil, sickness, recovery, or death,—these are instructive events, and he should be ready to allude to them in his family worship, so as to improve to the best purposes the feelings which such events are calculated to excite.

With trifling alterations, the form of morning and evening prayers contained in our Book of Common Prayer, and other approved manuals of devotion, may be readily accommodated; and with such devout prayers in his possession, no head of a family, who can read, will be excused on the plea of ignorance, or inability, for neglecting this duty. But without the uniform exhibition of good example, these exercises will generally prove unavailing; and this is a consideration of such primary importance, that I must beg leave to address some further observations on this head to those who have the care of a family. These should ever bear in mind, that the regular performance of family devotion, does not include the whole of this obligation. Nay, if it be not accompanied with the discharge of other duties peculiar to their station, the observance itself, worthy as it is of being held in reverence by all who join in it, will be in danger of incurring their aversion and contempt. Let me, therefore, remind those who lead in these devotions, of the necessity of supporting their credit by a holy consistency of conduct in the general tenor of their lives.

My brethren, where family worship is regularly observed, and its credit supported by a Christian life, a steady conduct, a prudent management of temporal affairs, upright dealings, and amiable tempers, on the part of those who take the lead in prayer, there can be no doubt of its proving beneficial to themselves, to their domestics, and to society at large. Some persons question the advantages of family worship, by alleging the irregular courses of many children, who have been educated in these exercises. But this fact, if fully proved, would only tend to show, what no one will controvert, that although parents may impart good instructions to their children, and set before them edifying examples, it is not in their power to bestow on them virtuous dispositions. These can be derived only from the Holy Spirit of God. The truth, therefore, is, that even where

great pains have been taken to train up children in the fear of God, we sometimes find the world triumphing over the instructor,—bearing away, by the force of its allurements, the lessons of wisdom which parents have inculcated ; and setting at nought the most edifying examples. It must be also allowed, that the wicked conduct of some children who have been religiously brought up, may be accounted for, in great measure, from the want of correspondence between the profession and the behaviour, between the prayers and the practice of parents. Too frequently among those, who profess themselves Christians, do we meet with inconsistency in matters of religion. Such is the case with those, who although they have family devotions, do not accompany it with the maintenance of order, or the firm and temperate exercise of parental authority. Among such persons there is frequently found great want of religious instruction. Some favourite points, perhaps, of Christian doctrine, or discipline, may be zealously enforced, while others of equal consequence are entirely neglected.—Children are taught to know the features of a heresy, while suffered to remain ignorant of sound principles of conduct. In a loose and general way, perhaps, the parent sometimes speaks of the consequences of vice, but does not mark with sufficient earnestness, the various forms under which it may appear ; nor does he keep a watchful eye over the tempers, the employments, and the connexions of his children ; or set before them the example of a sober, steady, and upright character. Who can be surprised, if the son of such a man turn out a libertine ? If nothing has passed before the eyes of a young man, but a few moments spent in prayer, what has he seen to make him venerate religion ? He, probably, has seen something, which falling in with his natural depravity, may lead him to despise it ; and if, through his parents' misconduct, he become a sufferer, who can wonder if he take up an aversion to it altogether ?

But let not such instances be alleged against the advantages of domestic worship. The proper improvement to be derived from them, is to learn how little good is to be expected, and how much mischief may ensue, from a *spurious* kind of religion. Let the profligate courses, therefore, which the children of inconsistent religionists have pursued, urge all to take heed that they fall not into the error of such parents. Let not Christian parents, either in their profession or practice, present a part only of religion to their families, but the whole of this heavenly system. In the superintendence of every well-regulated family, there should be devotion with instruction, and government with example. These should always go hand in hand,—and, while they support each other, they will give stability and comfort to the house in which they are exercised. It will be the abode of peace. In the superiors will be seen authority tempered with kindness; among the inferiors, sobriety, fidelity, industry, and frugality; and among them all, good will to each other will generally prevail, although through the frailty of human nature, there may be occasional interruptions of that harmony which the religious government of a family tends to produce.

Happy, thrice happy, the heads of families, whom the Lord will approve, as he did faithful Abraham, because he knows that they “will command their children, and their household after them, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment;” for the Lord will then bring upon them, as he did upon Abraham, “that which he hath spoken to him.” That is, he will make parents or masters, and children and domestics, mutual blessings to each other, as instruments and promoters of their happiness, temporal and eternal.

My brethren, it is in our families, that must be laid the foundation of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord, and probably of all the sources of that dissipation and vice which prevails in the world, one of the chief is the

neglect of family discipline and devotion. They, therefore, who would see good days, either for themselves or relatives, should attend to these things. When parents, and other heads of families, shall stand before the judgment-seat of God to render an account of their social conduct, and domestic duties, which constitute generally the sum of human life, how inexpressibly great will be their joy, if authorized to say to the Almighty Father of the human family, "behold us, and the children and domestics, whom thou hast given us." To Thee we render up the important trust committed to us for a time,—to Thee, to be disposed of for eternity.

To urge still further the heads of families to the practice of family devotion, let them be persuaded that nothing can contribute more powerfully to the observance of the first commandment with promise,—that commandment which is the link that binds society together. "Honour thy father, and thy mother," says the Almighty law-giver; and what can exhibit them more worthy of honour and veneration, than an abiding persuasion, that, like faithful Abraham, they are the friends of God? What child can be so insensible, what domestic so stubborn, as not to be excited to love, veneration, and obedience to the parent, master, or mistress, whom they daily behold on their bended knees, imploring upon their heads the choicest blessings of heaven, and accompanying their supplications by a Christian, corresponding behaviour? Some few hardened dispositions may be found to resist such powerful appeals to their feelings, such signal graces vouchsafed them from above. But, generally speaking, such family conduct will sow the seeds of virtue and religion in youthful hearts, and in due time ripen them into fruits of eternal life. And, now to conclude, may it please the God of all grace to accompany this present humble attempt to promote the practice of domestic piety with his blessing; disposing the hearts of parents, and other heads of families, to delight in imparting religious

instruction to their children and domestics. May their instructions be adorned and enforced by their holy example. May the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise be offered up in every family to the God of our salvation, and his blessing descend and rest upon all its members,—purifying their hearts, supporting them under their trials, uniting them more and more in the bonds of Christian charity, and affording them the refreshing foretaste of that glorious state, in which the blessed God will be worshipped with the most profound adoration, and the sublimest strains of praise. And now, &c.

SERMON XVI.

EARLY PIETY.

REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH, WHILE THE EVIL DAYS COME NOT, NOR THE YEARS DRAW NIGH, WHEN THOU SHALT SAY, I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THEM.—*Ecclesiastes* xii. 1.

THE young are too apt to consider religion as a dark and gloomy object. It seems to them calculated to check the sprightliness of their spirits, and to thwart the pursuit of their pleasures. If they have been educated by pious parents, they will regard religion with reverence and awe, but still it may seem to them a bondage from which they will sometimes long to become free. The house of God is apt to appear to them cheerless and melancholy, and their thoughts will often wander from prayers and thanksgivings to the enticing scenes of gaiety and joy. This is a disposition inherent, probably, in most young minds, and which, therefore, is to be treated with some indulgence. Yet, in this disposition, we may trace the first rise of irreligion in the heart; we may observe those corrupted springs from which the waters of bitterness afterwards flow; and in that distaste to the thoughts of religion, as inconsistent with the pleasures of youth. We shall discover the root of infidelity in some minds, and in others, of that eager following after vain enjoyments, which finally blots out every serious thought.

In order, therefore, to impress upon the minds of the young, the belief, that there is nothing severe in the advice of the wise man, contained in the text, I shall endeavour to prove, *first*, that religion is so far from checking, that it will add a relish to every innocent pleasure, which is natural to the season of youth; and, in the next place, to show that youth is the season in which religion and pleasure may be most easily made to unite, “while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”

I. Let us, then, consider the season of youth, and the innocent pleasures which it admits,—that season, when our limbs are vigorous,—when our hearts are light,—when our hopes are warm,—and when we begin to run the race of life with alacrity and joy. Care has not as yet sat down upon our minds; we have not yet experienced the vanity of the world, nor fallen a prey to discontent and repining. Every hour seems to start some new enjoyment,—something that we have not yet known, which may add new vigour to our spirits, and refresh our hopes. Life does not yet appear the same unvaried circle of dull employment, or of insipid amusement. All is smiling and delightful, for the evil days have not yet come, nor the years drawn nigh, in which we shall say we have no pleasure in them. Now, my brethren, it would indeed be a harsh design, if religion should be introduced to throw a cloud over this pleasing period, if it hastened the arrival of the evil days, instead of retarding them, or of breaking their force. If we were forbidden to use the vigour of our limbs,—if we were required to break down the cheerfulness of our spirits, and to tear from our hearts all love for those delights, which are ever opening upon us, we might indeed have some reason to complain that we served a severe master.

But religion never forbids the use of any thing which nature throws in our way. It only aims at checking the

abuse. Our heavenly Father deals with us in no other way than every wise parent acts with his child. A kind parent is pleased to see its child sprightly and gay, enjoying the amusements and games of his childhood. In those amusements, however, which he deems to be hurtful, he is careful to check him; and although it may cost a few tear and repinings, yet is he steady in enforcing obedience. Now, can we think it hard to be treated by our heavenly Father, in the manner in which the best and wisest parents treat their children? And do we see those children, who are wisely educated, less lively and cheerful, than those who are idly indulged? Where, then, is the severity of the precept, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth?" What pleasures will it prevent? What delights will it destroy? Will it make the face of nature appear less beautiful in our eyes? Will it make us have less delight in the society of our friends, or of those who possess our hearts? Does the child appear less sprightly in his play, who recollects that his father permits certain amusements, and forbids others, than one who runs thoughtless into all kinds of mischief, whenever he is beyond the observation of the parental eye? "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" and thou wilt, indeed, avoid the riots of intemperance, the insidious poison of loose debauchery, and all the other snares which lie in the path of youth. But wilt thou enjoy, with less satisfaction, the company of thy friend, or think with less delight on the object of thy chaste affections, or engage with less animation in the different occupations suitable to thy years? Every period of life has its peculiar duties and enjoyments, and religion does not expect, in a young person, all the composure and gravity of age. It however requires the young to be sober-minded, and not intemperately to give the reins to every eager desire. It requires the young, as well as the old, to remember that they are immortal beings, and that they will one day be called upon to give an account of their conduct; but under

this caution it permits them to "rejoice in their youth." "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the ways of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

So far, then, is the remembrance of our Creator from being a hindrance to youthful pleasures, that it must clearly add to them, and give them a higher relish. The child that amuses itself under a parent's smiles, surely enjoys a greater happiness, than when fearing to be interrupted in forbidden delights, and to be subject to parental frowns and displeasure. Must it not add to the lawful pleasures of youth, when we believe that the great Father of our spirits permits them a free scope, and delights to see the happiness of his children, while they confine themselves within the gracious rules of his administration? Will not the belief that we enjoy his approbation, cheer us under every restraint? And, if we must, at times, submit to his chastisement, shall we not kiss the rod, and still acknowledge his paternal love? Let us not, my brethren, form to ourselves a dark and gloomy notion of the God who made us; but let us regard him as the Father of mercies,—as the most mild and gracious of all beings. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children, to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

II. Let us, in the *second* place, proceed to enforce the argument of the wise man, by which he recommends early

piety. It is drawn from the consideration of the difficulty of becoming pious at any after period of life, if we have neglected the remembrance of our Creator in the days of our youth. While we are young, and enjoy life, we feel that it is a substantial blessing, and we can be thankful for it; and if we have attained the disposition of thankfulness in our youth, we can retain it when the evil days come, knowing that although there is little pleasure in them, yet they are the lot of humanity; and that if we bear up under their inconveniences with patience and resignation, we shall in no case lose our reward. But if our religious sentiments are to be first formed in the decay of our years, when the season of pleasure is over, and life wears a dismal and fading aspect, the task must evidently be difficult, and contrary to the bent of our nature. When we have wasted our youth in idleness and intemperance,—have lost the cheerful flow of our spirits,—and carry about with us a weary and worn out mind,—where is the room for those warm affections of the heart, without which our religion must be lame and imperfect? How can we, when our decaying frames, the wrecks, perhaps, of our intemperance and folly, seem rather to be the monuments of God's indignation, than examples of his love,—how can we then begin, for the first time, to lift our souls in gratitude to him, and to thank him for that goodness which we can with difficulty persuade ourselves that we have ever experienced?

If we do become religious in our old age, while we have neglected our Creator in our youth, our religion will be founded rather on fear than on love,—and we shall look up to the Author of our being, rather as a severe master, whom we must serve, than as a kind Father, whose commandments are given for his children's good. The religion which first begins in the midst of the evil days, will partake of all the gloom and melancholy of the season which gives it birth,—and instead of being the solace and comfort of that declining period, will perhaps tend to co-

ver it over with darker clouds. And yet it is evident, that old age can only be truly cheerful, when it is religious. Confidence in God alone can break the violence of those storms which will then probably assail us. The young may enjoy, for a time, a life of pleasure, without cultivating the habits of virtue and religion. The warmth, the flow, the alacrity of their spirits, may carry them through much dissipation, without great weariness, or a very keen perception that "all is vanity." But the old, tottering on the brink of the grave, with weakened bodies and weary minds, what, O God, can afford peace and comfort to them, but the humble assurance that thou art with them, and will never forsake them? And how can they possess this happy confidence, if instead of looking back on a religious life, passed in thy service, and directed by thy Spirit, they behold all their early years a vain scene of vice and disorder, and that they have only had recourse to thy protection, when all besides has failed them?

If, then, my brethren, we be desirous, at any time of our lives, to enjoy the blessings of religion,—if, when the pleasures of the world have failed us, when our eyes are dim, and our strength decayed,—and we have outlived the companions of our youth, and are travelling on to the grave in solitude and silence,—if at this dreary period, when we are in the midst of the evil days, we would still possess a friend "who sticketh closer than a brother," who can infuse into our hearts the truest comfort, and be a staff to our feet and light to our eyes, let us "remember our Creator in the days of our youth." God forbid that I should suppose he may not be found, at any time, by those who sincerely seek him, and even although we have been misled by youthful passions, and have neglected his service in our best days, that yet he will not accept of our sincere repentance when the evil days have come. But surely our repentance is much easier, while our transgressions are few, than when they are multiplied; the wound can surely be more easily healed when it is fresh,

than when it has rankled, and become a sore. It is impossible, moreover, not to perceive the gross impropriety of devoting that time only to the service of our Maker, which is the most inefficient, and of the least value in our existence. In pouring out the cup of life, shall we set apart the dregs only for the great Master of the feast? Shall our evil days alone be dedicated to that bounty, from which all the days of our years are derived, and no part of our pleasant days also? Is it thus that our Creator ought to be remembered? And can so preposterous a scheme of religion lead to any thing like consistent happiness? In vain, then, my brethren, will you attempt to postpone those duties, which are ever soliciting your attention, or to defer, till "a more convenient season," that service in which you never can be too early engaged, and which, when you are heartily engaged in it, you will indeed feel to be "perfect freedom."

But, in order thus to *remember their Creator in the days of their youth*, by dedicating themselves, betimes, to his service, the young should always bear in mind that their Creator only can be their effectual guide and protector through life. Accordingly he thus addresses himself to them in the words of the prophet:* "Wilt thou not, from this time, cry unto me, my Father thou art the guide of my youth?" Youth, then, stands in need of a guide; and *He* condescends to act as such, whom they are commanded to remember. I say the *young* are in need of a *guide*. We are expressly assured by the prophet, that "the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." And if this be the case with old travellers, who have long been moving on to the heavenly Zion, how much more so is it with those who are just beginning their journey? There is nothing we are so unwilling to own as our ignorance,—and the temptation to self-sufficiency is more peculiar to young people than to others. But it is

* Jer. iii. 4.

written, "though man would be wise, he is born as a wise ass's colt. They go astray from the womb, speaking lies." The human mind is naturally dark. We bring with us into the world no knowledge of any kind. It is all originally external, and drawn in through the senses. It is the consequence of instruction, and obtained by slow degrees. And as to religious knowledge, we should have been entirely destitute, but for a revelation from God. And even when this light is given, it is like the sun shining on a blind man; it affords the medium, but not the faculty of vision. Something else is still necessary to make us wise unto salvation. And hence David prays for himself: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law:" and hence the Apostle intercedes for the Ephesians, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." At any rate, there is one kind of knowledge, in which the young must be deficient. I mean that which is derived from trial, and which we call experience. They have not had opportunities to observe, to compare, and to distinguish the various occurrences of human life. They have not remarked the difference there is between appearances and reality, between the beginnings and the issue of enterprise. They are, therefore, liable to imposition and delusion. The less experience men have, the more needful is a guide. But, alas! that which should make youth diffident, renders it presumptuous. It is, without all doubt, the season of confidence, often rash and dangerous. Now, we read in holy writ, of the *meekness of wisdom*. And certain it is, that intelligence generally produces modesty,—it brings to view difficulties which never strike the superficial observer,—it shows us,

that so far are we from all claim to infallibility, that we are not only liable, but likely to err. For we may compare advancement in knowledge to sailing down a river which widens as we proceed, until the prospect expands into an ocean, and the land disappears. On the other hand, ignorance and inexperience generate and cherish rashness and forwardness. A quick growth generally indicates a shallowness of soil, and young people are very apt to mistake a readiness of apprehension for depth of judgment, and comprehensiveness of mind ; hence, they will often speak with decision on subjects which perplex their elders ; are positive where the wise are uncertain, and flounder on where talents and years are afraid to advance a step. At this season, also, the passions become violent and importunate. They cloud the understanding, and prevent reflection. They render young people averse to reproof, and impatient of control, urging them on, and plunging them into a thousand improprieties and embarrassments.

We may consider, further, their situation and circumstances, in this *present evil world*,—for if thus incautious and inexperienced,—if thus eager, confident, and impetuous, their road lie through a smooth and safe country,—they would not be exposed to very imminent danger,—but their journey must be made through regions full of pits and snares,—where enemies are concealed in ambush,—where by-paths are perpetually presenting themselves,—where seducers “ lie in wait to deceive,” and fruits embellish the sides of the road, fair to the eye, but deadly in the taste. And here,—what can be done here, without a guide ? Who will cry forbear,—there is danger,—these steps take hold on hell—“ This is the way, walk ye in it !” In a word, let us remember the consequences, which will arise from the wrong steps and mistakes of early youth. Many of these will make work for bitter repentance hereafter,—and with regard to others, repentance itself will be unavailing. They must endure the connexions they have

formed, and carry the infirmities which they have entailed upon themselves, down to the grave. The habits of their youthful years will not only give a colouring, but a character also, to the whole of their future lives.

Youth, then, evidently, wants a guide. But whom will ye choose, my young friends? Need I remind you that the Spirit of God is ready to become your leader, and that it is your duty and privilege to place yourselves under his direction? He would have you cry unto him, saying, "thou art the guide of my youth." The Israelites of old, in passing through the wilderness to Canaan, found in God, whatever their situation required. They were exposed to danger, and he was their defence. They were destitute of provisions, and he furnished them with supplies. They were in a trackless desert, without habitations, or landmarks, and he was their guide. By the fiery and cloudy pillar, he regulated all their journeyings and encampments, till, by a right way, he led them to the city of habitation. And thus he continues equally to be a leader to his people. "A good man's steps are ordered by the Lord. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." What peace and comfort must reflections like these excite in the mind of a devout Christian? "I have, 'tis true, a dangerous world to pass through," will he say, "and I wish to pass through it safely and usefully, and to reach heaven at last. This is my aim, as well as my desire, and I am not a lonely, or an uncertain traveller. God is with me. I am under the care of his providence. I have the Scripture for my rule. I have also the promise of the Spirit to lead me into all truth," "and, as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Here, surely, are sufficient motives to excite young persons to "remember their Creator in the days of their youth," and to choose him as their infallible guide through life. He, indeed, possesses all the qualities requisite in a con-

ductor, to lead them safely through the wilderness of this world. He is infinitely wise, and cannot lead them astray. He has conducted millions, and "the way-faring man, though a fool, has not erred," under his direction. He is infinitely powerful, and able, of course, to support them under the heaviest burdens,—deliver them from every adversary, and "make all things work together for their good." He is infinitely kind and merciful,—will bear with their infirmities, and sympathize with them in all their troubles. In a word, he is infinitely faithful,—not a word shall fail in all that he has spoken, and therefore we may say with David,—“this God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death.” Thus “he leads his people to make himself a glorious name.” And thus, all who have been under his guidance, have extolled their leader, especially after they have finished their course. When they looked back upon his dealings with them, the review inspired them with peculiar songs of wonder and praise; and their language has been expressions of thanksgiving “to him, who led his people through the wilderness,—for his mercy endureth for ever.”

Such is the glorious Being, who is willing to become the guide of the young, if they will remember him at this early season, and *cry unto him*, my Father, thou *art the guide of my youth*. You readily perceive that this familiar expression comprehends supplication and prayer,—such prayer as the most ignorant can find no plea for omitting. For what, in fact, is prayer, but an elevation of the heart towards God? They who cannot pray, can, at any rate, *cry unto him*. He can hear the voice of your weeping. He knows the meaning of a sigh,—of a look. “My desire,” says David, “is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee.”

And here it is proper to remark, *first*, that young persons are not authorized to expect this divine guidance, without remembering their Creator in fervent prayer. God’s own

declaration is decisive on this head,—“for all these things,” says he, “will I yet be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.”

Secondly, that with prayer and supplication, they must never despair of this guidance. The method of God’s Holy Spirit with the children of men, is first to produce in them a conviction of their necessities, and then to draw forth their desires after the influences and blessings which he has to bestow. But he who commands, and inclines us to call upon him, will not suffer us to call upon him in vain. “Ask, and it shall be given unto you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

Wherefore says the Scripture, “let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.” If, then, any who hear me, be conscious of having hitherto lived without him in the world,—if other Lords have had dominion over them, and they be now willing to abandon these usurpers, let them call devoutly on the Lord, and say, “Lord save us, or we perish,” and then let them be assured, he will in no wise cast them out, but will graciously receive, and freely love them. These are the cords of love, by which he would draw the young to himself,—and will they burst them asunder? So many are the ways in which he addresses them, and will they refuse him, who speaketh from heaven? O cherish these emotions, my young friends. To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Let me then address each of you in the language of inspiration,—“Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth? Wilt thou not remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth?”

Such is the question, with which God addresses you this day. And what answer do you return? I cannot imagine any thing more awful than this moment of suspense. Your relations, your Christian friends,—the enemy of your souls,

—the angels of God, and God himself, are all waiting for your reply to this solemn inquiry. Whether your pious connexions shall rejoice, or be miserable,—whether you shall be the plagues, or the blessings of society,—whether you shall add to the safety, or danger of your country,—whether there shall be joy in heaven, or in hell,—whether you shall be saved, or perish for ever. All,—all depends on the nature of the answer you return.

But solemn as these circumstances are, is there not too much reason for apprehending from many, a negative reply? Too frequently have appeals of this nature been made in vain to youthful consciences. The human heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Already, perhaps, some of the sinful desires of the flesh, and of the mind, have gained an ascendancy over you. Already, perhaps, you have armed yourselves with sceptical principles, or loose notions of religion. The temper of the times in which we live, is peculiarly discouraging; for the days are come, foretold by the Apostle, when “men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” To all this we may add, that the heads of families do not sufficiently second the exertions of Christian ministers, by adding private instruction, discipline, admonition, and example, to the public means of religion.

But these melancholy forebodings admit, I trust, of some comforting exceptions. While many are “following a multitude to do evil,” many also “are inquiring the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward.” They are disposed, O Lord, to “join themselves to thee, in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten.” Take them under thy guidance, and say unto their souls, “I am thy salvation: O

satisfy us right early with thy mercy ; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us : and establish thou the work of our hands upon us : yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." And now to God the Father, &c. &c.

SERMON XVII.

THE EASY YOKE.

MY YOKE IS EASY, AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT.—*Matt. xi. 30.*

It has frequently been observed, and, I fear, with too much truth, that it has been the fate of Christianity, in all ages, to suffer more from its friends, than from its enemies. Attacks from the enemies of our holy faith, have generally proved subservient to its propagation and success ;—but the misrepresentations and injuries of its friends, have often wounded it in a vital part. One of the greatest of these misrepresentations, and one of the most flagrant injuries that ever was done to religion, was to represent it as a burdensome service,—as a grievous and a galling yoke, to which no man would submit, but from the terror of eternal punishment. And what aggravates the injury, this has sometimes been done by persons of real seriousness, who, unhappily possessed of a gloomy imagination, and who, probably, at some period of their lives, having been guilty of flagrant crimes, have been so deeply affected with remorse and contrition, that they have continued all their days subject to bondage. But, blessed be God, my brethren, such unfavourable and forbidding delineations of religion have no foundation in truth. In the volumes of revelation, Christians are called upon to rejoice evermore. Religion promises happiness to us in the life which now is, as well as in the life which is to come. The wisdom that is from above, is represented as having length of days in her right hand,

and in her left hand, riches and honour. The Prophets and Apostles ransack heaven and earth for images to express the joys of the just : they bring together the most beautiful and most delightful objects in the whole compass of nature, and introduce the inanimate parts of the creation, as joining in the happiness of the good ; the hills and the mountains breaking forth into singing, and all the trees of the wood shouting for joy. So that all concurs to prove the truth of the text, “ my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

The world, indeed, and its votaries, will represent religion to you as an irksome burden, as an oppressive yoke ; but, upon the authority of Jesus Christ, and upon the testimony of all his disciples, we are authorized to assure you, that his commandments are not grievous, and that the ways he points out to his followers, are “ ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace.”

Wherefore, to the ease and pleasure of a Christian life, as the subject of this discourse, I now solicit your serious attention. But, before I enter upon it, I have one observation to make, which is, that in order to taste the joys of religion, we must have been accustomed to its influences, and made some advances in the divine life. For we can never have ■ relish for any pursuit, till we are acquainted with it. We can never enter into the spirit of any science, till that science is familiar to us. To those who have been long engaged in a course of wickedness, the duties of religion will at first be grievous and irksome, because they oppose strong prejudices, and confirmed habits of vice. But when these bad habits are removed, and good ones are contracted,—when a man acquires the temper, and enters into the spirit of religion, he then feels the joy which a stranger intermeddles not with. Put ■ musical instrument into the hands of an unskilful person, and nothing but harshness and discord is heard from every string. The artist alone makes music and harmony accompany all the

motions of his hand. Religion, like every thing else, must be learned, before it be understood.

I. But, to proceed, the Christian life, in the *first place*, is a life of ease and pleasure, on account of the principle, from which the Christian acts. The Christian is not a slave who obeys from compulsion, nor a servant who works for hire; he is a son who acts from ingenuous affection and filial love. When the Christian contemplates the goodness and tender mercies, and loving kindness of God, particularly his inexpressible love in the redemption of the world, by the only Son of his bosom, he is constrained to new obedience, by the most powerful of all ties, by the cords of love and the bands of a man,—both his reasoning and his feeling exciting this sentiment, that if one died for all, then they which are alive, ought not to live to themselves, but to him who died for them. Gratitude to a benefactor, affection to a Father, love to a friend, all concur to form the principle of evangelical obedience, and to strengthen the cord that is not easily broken. Love, therefore, is the principle of the Christian life: *love*, the most generous passion that glows in the breast of man,—the most active principle that works in the human frame,—the key that unlocks every finer feeling of the heart,—the spring that puts in motion every power of the soul. Pleasant are the labours of love. Short is the path, and cheerful the journey, when the heart goes along. A determined mind, enamoured of the object it pursues, removes mountains, and smooths the roughest paths: The fire cannot extinguish, nor the waters quench its force; it reigns supreme in the heart, and diffuses a gaiety over every scene of life. By its influence, labour becomes easy, and duty becomes a delight.

II. In the *second place*, the ease and pleasure of a Christian life, will appear, if we consider the assistance we receive from above. “Work out your salvation,” says the

holy Scripture, "for it is God that worketh within you every good work and word." There are, doubtless, difficulties in the Christian life. Let us not deceive ourselves. You will often find it difficult to act the proper part,—to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man,—to keep your passions within the bounds of reason,—to subdue your irregular inclinations to the obedience of faith, and to hold fast your integrity uncorrupted, amidst the temptations of the world. These and many other difficulties will beset you in running your Christian race. But remember, my brethren, that one half of the pleasures of human life arise from overcoming difficulties ; and to overcome these difficulties, God bestows the influences of his Holy Spirit. The Lord is ever nigh to them that call upon him in the sincerity of their heart. To those who wait at the salutary stream, an angel descends to stir the waters. God never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain. He never neglected the prayer that came from the heart,—he never forsook the man that put his trust in him. If, indeed, you were left to climb the arduous ascent by your own strength alone, then the Christian life would neither be easy nor pleasant,—then you might sit down in despair of ever arriving at the top of Zion. But the truth is, whatever duties God calls you to, he gives you abilities to perform them. According as your days are, he has promised that your strength shall be. His grace is sufficient for us ; his strength is made perfect in our weakness. No, my brethren, God has never withdrawn himself from the world. The Father of Spirits is ever present with his rational offspring,—he knows their frame, he helps their infirmities, assists their graces, strengthens their powers, and makes perfect what concerns them. He assists the feeble, he receives the languishing, he supports the strong. He aids the efforts of the captive, who endeavours to break loose from the fetters that hold him ; he favours the ascent of the devout mind, which, with the

confidence of faith, rises to himself, and he forwards the pilgrim, journeying on to his native country. The good husbandman superintends the vine which his own right hand has planted. He waters his vineyard with dews from heaven, and breathes ethereal influence on those trees of righteousness that shall adorn the paradise of God. Have you never felt him, my brethren, restraining your evil inclinations, suggesting holy thoughts, kindling heavenly affections, and drawing you to your duty, with a hand unseen? Have you not felt him as a Spirit within your spirit, imparting secret strength, animating your frame, as with new life, actuating your faculties, purifying your passions, begetting in you an abhorrence of sin, and a love of righteousness, and making all your graces shine out with fresh beauty? How easy and delightful then, will the Christian life be, when you have divine aids to strengthen, support, and assist? It is God himself, who is on your side, it is God himself who works with you,—his wisdom is your guide; his arm is your support; his Spirit is your strength; you lose your own insufficiency in the fulness of infinite perfection.

III. In the *third place*, it will appear that the Christian life is easy and pleasant, if we consider the encouragements the good man receives. The real Christian waits not for all his happiness, till he come to heaven: he has treasures in *hand*, as well as possessions in *hope*: he has a comfortable portion in the life that now is, as well as in that which is to come. There is a sense of moral good and evil planted in every mind; a principle of conscience which condemns us when we do ill, and applauds us when we do well. This principle is the chief foundation of our happiness, and gives rise to the greatest pleasures and the greatest pains in human life. By means of this moral sense, there is no peace to the wicked. Inward struggles, strong reluctance, and aversion of mind, precede the commission of

sin, and when once committed, it is followed by guilty blushes, alarming fears, terrible reviews, startling prospects, and remorse, with all its hideous train. Against the sinner, his own heart rises up in judgment to condemn him,—the terrors of the Lord set themselves in array against him,—a fire not blown consumes him. “There is no peace to the wicked.” The foundations of peace are subverted in his mind,—he is at enmity with himself,—he is at enmity with his fellow-creatures,—he is at enmity with God. It is *not so* with those who take upon them the yoke of Christ. When pure religion forms the temper, and governs the life, all is peaceful and serene; the man is then in his proper element; the soul is in a state of health and vigour; there is a beautiful correspondence between the heart and the life; all is serene without; all is tranquil within. Delivered from the anxieties that perplex, and from the terrors that overwhelm the guilty man, the Christian resigns himself to peace and joy, conscious that he possesses a temper of mind, which he humbly hopes is acceptable to God, and leads a life which is useful to men. In the heart of such a man, there is a blessed calmness and tranquillity, like that of the highest heavens. But there is more than a calmness and tranquillity. The air may be calm and tranquil, when the day is dark; the sea may be smooth, when there is a mist upon the waves; the sky may be tranquil, when it is overcast with clouds; but the pious and virtuous mind resembles a sky that is not only calm, but bright; resembles a sea not only smooth, but serene; resembles an unclouded sky, glowing beautifully with the rising sun. There are joys in the Christian’s life, unknown to transgressors; there is a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed, that refreshes the city of God; there are secret consolations reserved for the just; there are silent pleasures that flow into the pious mind; there is a still small voice that speaks to the pure in heart, and bids them be of good cheer; there is an inward peace of God that passeth all understanding; there is

a joy in the Holy Ghost, resulting from the well grounded hope of a happy immortality, that is unspeakable and glorious. When the heart is thus pure, it becomes the temple of the Deity, and *as a temple*, is consecrated with the presence of God. "If a man love me, and keep my words, my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him." Who can describe the joy of those happy moments, when a present Deity is felt, when God manifests himself to his people, so as he does not to the world, when our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ? Then a foretaste of immortality is given, the joys of the blessed are let down, and heaven descends to men, "for light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

From what has hitherto been said of the blessed effects of religion, it necessarily follows, that her "yoke is easy and her burden light." True, indeed, it is, that when any one who has been long indulging himself in the gross and unrestrained practice of vice, is checked in his career, and enters at first on a religious course, he has much to undergo, and submits reluctantly to the burthensome duties of repentance; they must weigh upon him, indeed, like a galling yoke. Fear, guilt, remorse, shame, and various other passions, struggle and conflict within him. His appetites are clamorous for their accustomed gratification, and inveterate habits are scarcely to be denied. He is weighed down with a load of guilt, and almost overwhelmed by a sense of unworthiness. But all this ought, in fairness, to be charged to the account of his past sins, and not to that of his present repentance. It rarely happens, however, that this state of suffering continues very long. When the mental gloom is the blackest, a ray of heavenly light occasionally breaks in, and suggests the hope of better days. Even in this life, it commonly holds true, "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy." The burden at first heavy becomes daily lighter, when we feel it relieving us from a weight incomparably

more oppressive, and the yoke sits easy upon a neck accustomed to bend to the slavery of sin, and all its degrading consequences. But, as has been already observed, to render the yoke of religion absolutely easy and pleasant, and her burden not only light, but precious and delightful, we must be convinced that "to drink deep, or taste not," is a direction full as applicable to religion, if we would find it a source of pleasure, as it is to knowledge. A little religion, it must be confessed, is apt to make men more gloomy, as a little knowledge to render them vain. Hence the unjust imputation often brought upon religion, by those whose attainments in this Divine science are just sufficient, by condemning their course of conduct, to render them uneasy; a religious sentiment enough merely to impair the sweetness of the pleasures of sin, and not enough to compensate for the relinquishment of them by its own peculiar comforts. Thus Christians of this description, bring up, as it were, an ill report of that land of promise, which, in truth, abounds with whatever in our journey through life can best delight and strengthen us. For to say nothing of a qualified, if not an almost entire exemption from those distracting passions, and corroding cares, by which *he* must naturally be harassed, whose treasure is within the reach of mortal accidents, there is the humble quiet-giving hope of being reconciled to God, and of enjoying his favour; there is that solid peace of mind, which the world can neither give nor take away, resulting from a firm confidence in the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, and in the unceasing care and kindness of a gracious Saviour; and there is the persuasion of the truth of the Divine assurance, that all things shall work together for good. When the pulse of life, indeed, beats high, and we are flushed with youth, and health, and vigour; when all goes on prosperously, and success seems almost to anticipate our wishes, then we feel not the want of religious consolations. Her yoke would be an insufferable restraint, and her burden would be intolerable.

But when fortune begins to frown, and friends to forsake us ; when sorrow, or sickness, or old age, comes upon us, then it is that the superiority of the pleasures of religion is established over those of dissipation and vanity, which are ever apt to fly from us, when we are most in want of their aid. There is scarcely a more melancholy sight to a considerate mind than that of an old person, who is a stranger to those only true sources of satisfaction. How affecting, and at the same time how disgusting is it, to see such persons awkwardly catching at the pleasures of their younger years, which are now beyond their reach ; or feebly attempting to retain them, while they mock their endeavours and elude their grasp ? To such persons, gloomily indeed does the evening of life set in ! All is sour and cheerless. They can neither look backward with complacency, nor forward with hope ; while the aged Christian, relying on the assured mercy of his Redeemer, can calmly reflect that his dismissal is at hand ; that his redemption draweth nigh. While his strength declines, and his faculties decay, he can quietly repose himself on the fidelity of God ; and at the very entrance of the valley of the shadow of death, he can lift up an eye, dim, perhaps, and feeble, yet occasionally sparkling with hope, and confidently looking forward to the near possession of his heavenly inheritance, “ to those joys which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.” What says the Scripture ? “ The work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”* “ Great peace have they which love thy law.”† “ The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace.”‡

A yoke of some description or other, it is the lot of every man to wear, and to labour under the weight of some determinate burden. In the present system of things restraints are necessary to curb unruly and destructive pas-

* Isaiah, xxxii. 17.

† Ps. cxix. 165.

‡ St. James.

sions, and the burdens of suffering humanity are numerous and oppressive ; but the restraints of religion compared with any others are pleasant and easy, and her duties weigh more lightly upon the mind. This, I conceive, might be readily shown, in a variety of instances, and in this supposition it is surely the part of a wise man, as well as of a devout Christian, to submit to what will contribute most to his ease and happiness. To be influenced rather by the gentle sway of God's Spirit, than by the tyranny of sin ; to suffer the control of the sacred law of liberty, rather than bend the knee to Baal, and become the slaves and dupes of the artifices of Satan.

Moreover, that the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light, compared with any other system of religious restraints and ordinances that ever existed, might readily be proved by running over them all. Among the nations of old, who knew not the living God, their religious exercises were cruel and oppressive, in proportion as their affectation of piety was more conspicuous, and their zeal more ardent. To the intolerable burden of their guilt, they deemed it a religious duty to add the most unnatural sacrifices,—to sacrifice even the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their souls. The two most numerous sections of Anti-Christian religionists on the globe, I mean the followers of Mahomet and Boudah, spread over the vast regions of India and Africa, while slaves to the most abominable passions of our nature, wear a galling yoke, and groan under oppressive burdens from motives of religion, which shock all the feelings and delicacies of man. As to the religion of the Old Testament, though essentially the same with that of the New, yet was it attended with many burthensome ceremonies, and painful injunctions, so as to be generally characterized under the denomination of the fear of God. Unacquainted for the most part with the feelings of Divine love, and with the worship in Spirit and in truth, the Jews were accustomed principally to very awful representations of the

Deity, and living under the discipline of a *school-master*, (as the Apostle calls the law,) fear prevailed beyond every other principle in their religious services. Objects were darkened in coming to them through the veil of types and figures, the meaning of which was but gradually disclosed, even to the prophets themselves. Obscurity always creates dread ; and when the Divine blessing was seen only through the terrible majesty of the law, his attributes rather excited awful veneration than filial confidence. But when God was manifested in the flesh, we beheld the glory of his person, in the face of his only begotten Son, and we beheld it full of grace and truth. The motives which enforced obedience on the Jews were always adapted to their knowledge. As the discoveries of truth opened on their minds, so were the privileges connected with them proportionably unfolded ; nevertheless, in the most enlightened periods of the Jewish Church, we find but very few and very feeble traces of those sublime and endearing motives, by which Christianity is adorned and recommended,—its *yoke made easy*, and its *burden light*.

The law of Moses was enforced by temporal sanctions. Not that a future state was unknown to the Jews ; they had conceptions of it, though faint and obscure. But the Gospel *has brought life and immortality to light*. It has dispersed those shades, which so hung over it, as to render it, to the eye of unassisted reason, a subject of doubtful speculation, rather than of cheerful hope, and has placed it in a point of view unknown even to the favoured people of God under the law. It has reduced to a certainty what nature, at the farthest stretch of her powers, could barely regard as a conjecture, and demonstrated as a fact what the Jews were only permitted to behold, through the obscure medium of types and figures, as a distant probability. It is this firm conviction of life and immortality, that seasons all the duties of religion with the unction of the Holy Ghost, renders its yoke quite easy and its burden light. With

the glorious term of his existence in view,—with the love of Christ enlivening all his exertions,—and humbly rejoicing, because he trusts his name is written in heaven,—the true believer submits cheerfully to those restraints, which he is convinced will promote his peace of mind, nor feels the weight of those obligations which he knows will terminate in his everlasting happiness. If, at times, the frailty of human nature, should render his burden apparently irksome or weighty, and his mind should experience a rising inclination to shake the yoke from his neck, which the world may represent as unreasonable and galling, he remembers what is written, “cast thy burden upon the Lord,”—Him he has always as the companion of his journey ; and having borne our sorrows to their utmost extent, he will not refuse to share our fatigues in the journey of life, and sooner or later, to convert all our ways into ways of pleasantness, all our paths into paths of peace.

To conclude, the *yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light* ; or, in other words, the Christian life is comfortable and pleasant, if we consider the joyful prospect held out to the pious believer. The sincere Christian possesses, even in this life, very substantial joys ; but he is not confined to these. His hopes do not terminate with life ; they extend beyond the grave. Death puts a final period to the enjoyments of the wicked man ; but it is then that the happiness of the righteous man begins. We are assured in sacred Scripture, that there is a kingdom prepared for the righteous from the foundation of the world, when they shall enter into rest from all their labours, and sufferings, and sorrows of this mortal life,—when they shall enter into a state, where no ignorance shall cloud the understanding, and no vice pervert the will, where nothing but love shall possess the soul, and nothing but gratitude employ the tongue,—where they shall be admitted to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and Church

of the first born, where they shall see Jesus at the right hand of the Father, and shall sit down with him upon his throne, where they shall be admitted into the presence of God ; shall behold him face to face, and be changed into the same image from glory to glory ; that glory which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive. And now to God the Father, &c. &c. &c.

S E R M O N X V I I I .

U N C E R T A I N T Y O F L I F E .

BOAST NOT THYSELF OF TO-MORROW, FOR THOU KNOWEST NOT WHAT A DAY MAY BRING FORTH.—*Prov.* xxvii. 1.

It is with singular satisfaction, my brethren, that I address you on the first day of another year. The day, indeed, is only distinguished from others by human institution ; but this has given it various advantages and characters, natural and civil, intellectual and moral. It is a season often appropriated to special purposes, such as balancing accounts, commencing business, and forming connexions. It is a season marked by humanity and benevolence. Family circles are more generally formed—friendship renews every lively sympathy—and all, however indifferent at other times, yield to custom, and wish the returns of this day may be many and happy. It is a season of thankfulness and joy. We are led to praise the Great Preserver of men, who has held our souls in life, and carried us through the unnumbered dangers of another year, while our feelings are tempered to solemnity by the reflection, that many have finished their course, and that we look for some of our own relations or acquaintances in vain—for it is a period of seriousness and recollection. It reminds us of the instability of the world, and the rapidity of time. Of this, indeed, every day and every hour should remind us ; but the changes made, and the losses occasioned by these variations, are too common and inconsiderable to

awaken reflection : the termination of a year seems necessary to rouse even the careless, and to impress even the insensible ; who, if they will suffer the subject to operate on their minds, must experience for a moment the sentiment of Job : “ When a few years are come, I shall go the way whence I shall not return.” But there is another relation in which we may consider this day. When we begin a new division of time, we naturally look forward, and endeavour to penetrate our future condition. The prospect is intimately connected with many of our duties, and will become injurious or profitable, according to the manner in which it is indulged. “ Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”* And if this caution be necessary for a day, with how much greater force will it apply to a year ? Who, in fact, will pretend to know what this year will *bring forth* ? When we look into futurity, all that meets the eye is impenetrable darkness. Even in those cases in which God has announced things to come, the prophecy is wrapt up in so much obscurity, that the fulfilment and the explanation generally arrive together. “ It is not for us to know the times and the seasons, which the Father has put into his own power.” In the course of a few years only, how have all our conjectures been disappointed ! More than once we imagined that we had seized the clue, and the intricacies of Providence seemed likely to be unravelled ; but suddenly we found them more perplexing than ever. And who is the man that would undertake to determine what will be the state of the nations upon earth, a few months hence ? With respect to ourselves, we have no information that can enable us to see how things will go with us for another year. We know not what will be the state of our health—what seeds of disorder may spring up in our frame—what accidents may befall our persons. With respect to our out-

* Prov. xxvii. 1.

ward circumstances, can we say, what this year will bring forth? What losses or successes we may experience—what new sources of enjoyment may be opened—or what old ones may be dried up? You know not how you may be situated this year, respecting your dearest relatives; whether you will be blessed with their continuance, or bereft of their society. I pray God to take this congregation into his holy keeping: but, in what different circumstances may the members of it assemble together, on the return of this day! The wife may be seen in widowed weeds! The children may appear fatherless orphans! The sister may say, “Alas! my brother!” From this view of future uncertainty, let us learn to *boast* not of *to-morrow*; but to know our own insufficiency and littleness, let us confess that we are nothing, and that God is all in all. Vain *man* would be wise, and there is nothing of which he is so proud as his knowledge; whereas this should, indeed, be a motive to his humiliation. For, alas! how narrow the limits of his knowledge! “Who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?” Can he distinguish between appearances and reality? Can he see the combination, the dependencies, and the effects of things? Does he *boast himself of to-morrow? when he knoweth not what a day may bring forth.* “The way of man is not in himself, it is not man that walketh to direct his steps.”

Since, then, our future lot is hidden from our eyes, let us draw off our attention from future events to present duties. We are to cast, not *our work*, but *our care* upon the Lord. Duty is ours, and means are ours; but events are entirely His. Our ignorance, however, is only limited to *time*. In *eternity*, all is fixed and certain. Beyond this land of darkness, dwells everlasting light. Our uncertainty regards only the roughness or smoothness of the way; for we know what stands at the end of it. It is

our Father's house, in which there are many mansions ; and let us set out immediately on our journey towards it ; let us make haste, and *delay not a moment to keep his commandments* ; and let present uncertainty excite us to adopt the only means of future security and peace. Let us be convinced that we have much business to despatch relative to our final well-being, which requires not only great care and industry, but considerable time also. This, unless we begin immediately, may be found insufficient, and thus our essential business may be left unfinished. To subdue and correct our evil inclinations, to bring our sensual appetites under the yoke of reason and religion ; to compose our boisterous passions into calm and orderly excitements to laudable action ; to cleanse our souls from vanity, perverseness, and all the vicious distempers of our nature, and in their room to plant the firm habits of virtue ; to obtain a distinct knowledge of our duty, and a steady disposition to perform it—in a word, to season our minds with holy affections, such as may qualify us for the presence of God, and the conversation of the blessed spirits above—this is what we all have *to do*, and certain it is, that it requires much time to do it ; *for a patient continuance in well-doing* (as the Apostle speaks) no time can be redundant, no life can be too long.

“ *Art is long, but life is short,*” may be an aphorism in *Divinity* as well as in *Physic* ; the art of living *soberly and righteously and godly*, in the present world. For, let us be assured, my brethren, that religious habits are not formed in a moment, or, like certain unsubstantial plants, spring up unobserved during the course of a night. They are, on the contrary, productions of a delicate nature and slow growth, requiring much pains in their cultivation, much attention to mature them, much care to protect them, while growing in the barren soil, and exposed to the chilling blasts of this wicked world. Happiness is too precious a treasure to be purchased at an easy rate—too glorious a crown to be won without a conflict. Neither is vice a

spirit that can be conjured away with a charm ; or an adversary that can be subdued with a single blow. Experience abundantly teaches, that settled habits, both of virtue and of vice, are the work of time. Can, for instance, the peevish and choleric temper, without long continued exertions, become patient and meek ? Can the proud in the *imaginations of their hearts*, be brought to think humbly of themselves, till much time is bestowed in fathoming these imaginations, and discovering them to be groundless ? Can intemperance pass suddenly into sobriety, or covetousness into liberality, or licentiousness into order, or lukewarmness into devotion ? The fact is, a total change in the human mind is one of the most astonishing revolutions in nature, and not to be accomplished in any manner, or within any time, that we may choose to prescribe. It progresses leisurly and regularly, by such steps as the nature of things will permit. It must be effected by resolute and laborious perseverance ; by a watchful application of the mind, in discharging prejudices, in seizing opportunities, and attending to all we do ; by forcibly wresting our nature from its evil bent, and swimming against the current of impetuous desires ; by patiently disentangling ourselves from practices most familiar and agreeable to our propensities ; by cautiously fencing our hearts against temptations ; by long and painful struggles against many oppositions and difficulties. And hence it is, that the holy Scriptures justly style our lives a warfare, in which we must engage in many a desperate combat, with most formidable foes—a *race* which we must run with incessant activity and swiftness. If, therefore, we mean to be virtuous or happy, it concerns us essentially to lose no time, but to be *up* immediately and *doing* ; to snatch every occasion, to embrace every measure for reforming our hearts and our conduct. The prudent traveller, with a long journey before him, departs early in the morning, nor loiters on the road, lest night overtake him before he reach his home.

So we who are journeying towards our heavenly country, should convince ourselves that it lies at a great distance, that the obstacles which we are certain to meet with on our journey, ought to stimulate our diligence, and that the longer we defer it, the more time we shall want, and the less we shall have.

Let us consider further, that no future time which we may intend to fix upon, will ever be more convenient than the present for amendment of life and religious improvement. Let this period arrive when it may, it will find us as unwilling and as unprepared to begin as we now are; we shall experience within ourselves the same indispositions, the same aversion, the same listlessness which we now feel, the same pretences for delay will occur, and we shall be as much disposed to put off the business at that time as we are at present. We shall say then, *to-morrow* we will amend; and when that morrow arrives, it will be *to-morrow* still; and probably continue to be so to the end. If, like the simple rustic, who stayed waiting by the river-side till it should cease to flow, that he might cross its channel, we persuade ourselves that the sources of sin will be spent, or cease to annoy us, we shall surely find ourselves sadly deluded.

We may reflect, further, that the longer we defer our reformation, the more painful and difficult it will prove. Every day increases the task, and our inability to perform it. Sin is never stationary. If we do not retreat from it, we must advance in its ways; and the farther we go, the farther must we return—all the web which we spin must be unravelled, all the evil habits which we interweave with the very texture of our nature, must be torn off with painful violence, and discarded. As vice grows in age, it increases also in size and in strength. A mere child at first, it soon rises to the activity of youth, and to the vigour of manhood—till, at length, it becomes an enormous giant, and baffles all our endeavours to subdue it. But what is still

worse, our weakness increases with the growth of this evil, for it feeds upon our vitals, and thrives by our decay. It flourishes by stripping us of our best resources, by obscuring our reason, by perverting our will, by corrupting our temper, by debasing our resolution, by seducing all our appetites and passions into a treacherous compliance with its suggestions ; for the power and empire of sin gradually usurp every faculty of the mind, every affection of the soul, till the whole man is completely subdued and enthralled ; till he love and cherish and hug his chains, and habituate himself at last to call good *evil*, and evil *good*. Now, in a case of this nature, should a reform be desired, should even a contest with sin be attempted, where are the weapons with which we must fight ? Natural modesty is a curb, and conscience is a check upon the threshold of vice ; the heart of a raw novice in impiety is somewhat delicate and tender, open to the sting of remorse and the remonstrances of duty ; but they who have entered fully into the pandemonium, and become proficient in iniquity, have hearts insensible to the charms of virtue and religion, necks that feel not the galling yoke of sin. Like those mentioned by St. Paul, who, being *past feeling*, have given themselves over “to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness ;” or, as the Psalmist observes,* “God is not in all his thoughts, the fear of God is not before his eyes”—the wrath of the Almighty he considers as a phantom, and the fiercest menaces of religion sound as empty rattles in his ears. As to the gentle whispers of Divine grace, the monitory dispensations of Providence, the good advice and wholesome reproofs of friendship, with other appropriate means for reclaiming sinners, they are but summer breezes assailing the stubborn oak, or as gentle surges dashing against a rock. Now what can subdue a man thus hardened in iniquity ? What pains, what lengthened pains, must

* Psalm x. 4.

be necessary to re-establish natural modesty in all her rights, to stimulate a seared conscience, to supple a callous heart, to restore the equilibrium of reason, to endue the benumbed and torpid faculties of the soul with their original sensibility and vigour?

We may consider, also, that by delaying to keep God's commandments, it may at length become impossible to do so without the interference of a miracle. This impossibility arises either from the nature of the case itself, or from the positive will of God. It may be, naturally speaking, impossible to reform: for vice, by custom, may pass into nature, and become so far incorporated into our physical and moral constitution, as to make us incline to it, just as a stone falls to the earth, or as a spark flies upwards. Now, in this situation, without a manifest miracle, there can be no reformation. A man is then "dead in trespasses and sins."* His breath of holy affection is stopt, and the spiritual pulse beats no longer in his heart—the sense of duty is lost—gone is the appetite to godliness—all the finer spirits of the soul are dissipated, and all its powers shattered and extinguished. Nothing short of Omnipotency can revive them. But the impossibility of repenting may arise from a cause still more infallible; it may arise from the will of God himself. Divine grace is absolutely and indispensably necessary to effectual repentance; but *that* grace depends entirely upon the free will of God—"the Spirit bloweth where it listeth;" but it is surely dispensed with infinite wisdom, respecting both the past behaviour and the present capacities of men. Shall we, therefore, presume that it will be given to those who have abused, or those who actually reject it? Shall we reasonably hope, that after trifling with God's grace by presumptuous delays; after he has *long waited in vain to be gracious*—after his goodness has been insulted, and his menaces despised, that he will still continue the solicitations of his grace?

* Eph. ii, 1.

My brethren, there is a *time*, a *season*, a *day*, allotted to us, it is termed a *day of salvation*, the season of *our visitation*, an *acceptable time*; when God makes us a free offer of his grace and *mercy*. If this day is suffered to pass by, then "the night cometh, when no man *can* work," when "the things belonging to our peace will be hidden from our eyes;" "when," (as the Prophet expresses it,*) "we shall grope for the wall, like the blind, and stumble at noon-day as in the night, and be in desolate places, as dead men;" when God, *being weary of bearing* with men, shall deliver them over to a reprobate mind, and by withdrawing his gracious direction and assistance, "shall give them over to their own heart's lusts, and to walk in their own heart's counsels." When they shall be constrained to complain, as the Prophet writes, "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?" When that threat of divine wisdom shall be executed, "they shall call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord."

True it is, that God is ever ready, upon our genuine conversion, to receive us into favour; that his arms are always open to embrace a sincere penitent; that he has declared expressly, "whenever a wicked man turneth from his wickedness, and doeth that which is right, he shall save his soul alive;" and again, "if we rend our hearts, and turn unto the Lord, he is gracious and merciful, and will repent of the evil." These, and many other similar declarations, evince, that although man, of himself, is unable to repent effectually, yet, when sincere and honest, his endeavours will not be rejected, as God will then, as St. Austin speaks, "crown his own graces in behalf of that man." Let a person, therefore, be a profane apostate, and a bloody oppressor, like Manasses; a public sinner, like the peni-

* Isaiah.

tent woman in the Gospel; a notable thief, like him on the cross; a treacherous friend, like Peter; a furious persecutor, like Paul. Let him be the greatest sinner that ever lived; yet if he be disposed to repent, he is capable of mercy. If we can turn to God at all, we shall not turn too late,—yet, notwithstanding all these comfortable assurances, let us never forget the sentiment of the text, and its evident necessity, “boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” Let the danger of thus presuming on future amendment of life, be strongly impressed upon your minds, from the uncertainty under which you must lie, whether God will enable you hereafter to bewail your sins, and forsake them. May you not rather apprehend, that he will chastise your presumption by withholding his grace? For although he never fails to afford competent assistance to those who have not “despised his goodness and long-suffering, that leadeth them to repentance,”* yet he that wantonly loiters away the time, and squanders the means allowed him for repentance; who refuses to listen to God’s repeated call, and kind invitations to repentance, how, I say, can he expect, with confidence, an uninterrupted continuation of these favours? We might add to all this, that supposing God, in the superabundance of his mercy, should never be induced to withhold his grace, yet since this grace does not operate by irresistible compulsion, since the less qualified we are, the more apt we shall be to cross and defeat its intentions; since we have no reason to hope that we shall be ever more fit to comply with it, than we *now* are, do we not by delaying our repentance, manifestly risk, not only the forfeiture of divine grace, but incur the danger of abusing it, which, of course, will greatly aggravate our guilt, and augment our punishment? Let us then attend seriously to the Apostle’s admonition,†

“Exhort one another to-day, while it is called day, lest any

* Rom. ii. 4.

† Heb. ii. 13.

of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." On this very day, my brethren, this beginning of another year, when we find ourselves invited to repent; when we see clearly the necessity of so doing; when we feel our hearts somewhat inclined to *make haste*; when time is still allowed us, and the gate of mercy is still open; while yet our religious improvement is neither extremely difficult, nor absolutely impossible,—on this *very* day, I repeat it, let us, in God's name, seize the occasion, make haste, in good earnest, and boast not what we will do to-morrow.

Lastly, we should consider that we are frail and mortal beings; and that, therefore, any projects or resolutions of future reformation may be frustrated by death. This certain term of our mortality is constantly advancing upon us, and who can tell how near it may be. You say, you will repent to-morrow, but are you sure that *to-morrow* will be yours? Where is the man that has the disposal of one day of his life? Who can show a lease of it for any certain period? Can any man reckon upon the least portion of time, without his permission, who bestows life, and deals out all its portions, and orders all things as he pleases? Can any man descry the true measure "of his days, or the bounds of his appointed time," without a special revelation from *him*, in whose hands is *our breath*; and *with whom* alone, the number of *our months is registered*? "Boast not thyself of to-morrow," says the wise man, "for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." In other words, pretend not, that futurity is at thy disposal, presume not upon any thing that belongs *to hereafter*. Remember what was said to the rich projector in the Gospel: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Setting aside the hidden decrees of God, is not the life of every man suspended by a very slender thread? Do not daily instances occur of persons being cut off in the flower of their age, and the vigour of their strength? Is not the observation of the inspired preacher continually verified, that

“man knoweth not his time ; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it cometh suddenly upon them.” Old persons are ready to drop off themselves, and the youthful are easily shaken down into their graves. The former stand evidently on the brink of eternity ; the latter walk upon a treacherous quicksand, into which they are every moment in danger of sinking. We are all, therefore, highly concerned to use life, while we have it ; to catch every opportunity, lest none be allowed us. To *make haste*, in good earnest, and not delay “to keep God’s commandments,”—to watch, as our Saviour enjoins, “for we do not know the day, nor the hour, when the Son of Man cometh ;” “to take heed to ourselves, lest at any time our heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life ; and so that day come upon us unawares ;” “to have our loins girded about, and our lamps burning ; and to be like men that wait for their Lord.” For, to sum up all, my brethren, the time is short. We are but guests in a strange land, who tarry but one night. We wander up and down in a place of graves. We read the epitaphs upon the tombs of the deceased. We shed a few tears over the ashes of the dead ; and in a little time, we shall claim from our surviving friends the tears we now pay to the memory of our friends departed. Time is precious. The portion of it is now passing that fixes our fate for ever. The hours are, at this instant, on the wing, which carry along with them your eternal happiness, or eternal misery. Time is irrecoverable. The clock is wound up once for all ; the hand is advancing, and in a little time, it strikes your last hour. Let me, therefore, beseech, let me implore you, my brethren, in the bonds of friendship, and in the bowels of the Lord ; by the tender mercies of the God of peace ; by the dying love of a crucified Redeemer ; by the precious promises and awful threatenings of the Gospel ; by all your hopes of heaven, and

fears of hell ; by the worth of your immortal souls, and all that is dear to men ; let me conjure you to accept immediately of the offers of mercy, and fly from the wrath to come. "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation." All the treasures of heaven are now opening to you ; the blood of Christ is now pleading for the remission of your sins ; the Church on earth stretches out her arms to receive you ; the spirits of just men made perfect are eager to enrol you among the number of the blessed ; the angels and archangels are waiting to break out into new hallelujahs of joy, on your return ; the whole adorable Trinity is now employed in your behalf ; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, at this instant, call upon you, weary and heavy laden, to come unto them, that ye may have rest unto your souls. O hearken, while you may, to his heavenly call, and then will you be numbered among "the blessed, and thrice blessed souls, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find thus prepared for his summons." And now to God the Father, &c. &c. &c.

S E R M O N X I X .

THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIAN HOPE.

WHY ART THOU CAST DOWN, O MY SOUL; AND WHY ART THOU DISQUIETED WITHIN ME? HOPE THOU IN GOD, FOR I SHALL YET PRAISE HIM, WHO IS THE HEALTH OF MY COUNTENANCE AND MY GOD.

Ps. xlii. 11.

It is a mistaken notion, which some persons are fond of entertaining, that the life of a Christian is one continued scene of tranquillity, cheerfulness and joy,—that the path to heaven is strewed with roses,—that there is nothing thorny or uneven to annoy the pilgrim's feet, no storms or tempests to retard his progress, no difficulties or dangers to encounter in the way. Such sentiments as these have a very pernicious influence on the practice of mankind. Naturally prone to indolence in spiritual things, and averse to religious exercises of every description, they are apt to catch at the pleasing delusion, and are willing to believe that the victory is obtained, before they have even armed themselves for the combat. The truth, indeed, is this: ever since the original transgression of man, good and evil are so mixed and interwoven in the present chequered and imperfect state of things, that we can neither obtain the former, nor avoid the latter, without inexpressible labour, pain and anxiety. The disorders introduced by sin into the moral, have darkened and corrupted the natural world; so that, in either system, it requires more than human abilities to separate the evil from the good, and thereby to obtain

temporal or spiritual felicity. By the glorious scheme of redemption, indeed, the good providence of God has overruled these disorders and irregularities in such a manner, as to render them beautifully subservient to the supreme happiness of his moral creatures. Storms and tempests, pain and labour, are become necessary for the health and preservation of the natural world: sorrows and anxieties, distresses and afflictions, inward pangs and struggles, are alike expedient for the purity and perfection of moral accountable creatures. God, therefore, who at one intuitive glance, beholds all the relations and connexions of things like a wise and provident Father, affectionately anxious for the welfare of his children, makes use of all these natural means in various measures and degrees, according to the particular situation and circumstances of men, to restore to them that primitive felicity, which had been lost by sin. Or, to express myself in plain scriptural language,—“It is through much tribulation we enter into glory: we must mourn before we can be comforted. If we would be Christ’s disciples, we must deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow him. The world must be crucified unto us, and we unto the world. If we would receive an eternal weight of glory, we must have our share of those light afflictions, which are but for a moment. If we would taste the peaceable fruits of righteousness, we must be exercised by those chastenings, which, for the present, are not joyous, but grievous.” But, if such be the unavoidable state of a Christian; such the dangers, difficulties, and distresses that attend it, surely he can have little joy or comfort in his progress. There is something gloomy, melancholy, and forbidding in the prospect. So speaks the natural man, who is void, as the Apostle tells us, of all spiritual discernment. Would such a man, however, deem any toil or danger too great to encounter, for the acquisition of some earthly object of primary importance? Would he not compass sea and land, risk his health, and oftentimes his life, to obtain

the fleeting enjoyment of honour, wealth, or pleasure ? And will he wonder, then, that a Christian should be willing to face the darkest scenes, when he knows that through these he shall pass to the enjoyment of everlasting honours ; of riches, which will not make to themselves wings and flee away ; and of pleasures, inconceivably exalted, unfading, and immortal ? When the heavens gather blackness, when thunders roll over his head, and lightnings flash around him, the natural man, at the very time that his heart shudders at the awful scene, will tell you that these convulsions of nature are absolutely necessary for the good of the creation ; that the sun is still shining above the tempestuous atmosphere, and that, ere long, its rays will dissipate the clouds, and exhibit to his view the happy effects of all this uproar and confusion. With this pleasing hope he speaks peace to his fears, and though he trembles, he enjoys the storm. Thus it is with the faithful Christian, when overtaken in his spiritual progress, by the blackest tempests, that the devil, the world, and the flesh, his most formidable adversaries, can raise, he will nevertheless press forward with unremitting eagerness and ardour ; and though “ his soul may be cast down and disquieted within him ;” though his whole nature may be shocked by the violence of the blast, yet will he “ still hope in God ;” yet will he still speak comfort to his dejected spirit ; as he is well assured, that all this could not happen without the divine permission ; that the sun of righteousness still shines in the firmament of his glory ; and that the prince of the power of the air, with all the horrors that surround him, must soon vanish before his all-piercing beams, and sink confounded to his own abode.

The Psalm, from whence the text is taken, presents us with a lively picture of a true believer, struggling under some violent assaults from the enemies of his peace. Whether the distress of David was occasioned by the persecution of Saul, or the straights to which he was reduced by the unnatural rebellion of his son Absalom ;

whether it proceeded from a deep sensibility of those remains of corruption, which lurk in the breasts of the holiest of men, or from an apprehension, that God had withdrawn the "light of his countenance" from his soul; in either of these cases his affliction must have been acute indeed, and he might well break forth into this affecting strain of religious melancholy: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" Why dost thou suffer these outward afflictions to bear down thy constancy, or these inward struggles to weaken thy faith? "Hope thou in God." Hast thou not heretofore experienced, in innumerable instances, the wonders of his love? Has not his arm supported thee in the greatest extremities? Has not his countenance cheered thee in thy darkest moments? Why then this strange dejection now? O where then is fled all thy wonted heroism? Where is that lively trust and confidence in thy God, that has hitherto steeled thy breast against all the arrows of adversity? "Is his arm shortened that it cannot save? is his mercy clean gone for ever? and has God forgotten to be gracious?" Ah, no, my soul! already do I feel his animating presence. Sure I am, that "I shall yet praise him," for "he is the health of my countenance, and my God." Thus spake, thus triumphed, "the man after God's own heart." The conflict, doubtless, was severe and tedious; but faith was at length victorious. Noble encouragement this to every one that has enlisted under the banners of Jesus Christ, and commenced his Christian warfare. Let all the candidates of heaven, therefore, the followers of the Lamb, the strangers and pilgrims upon earth, who have already entered upon their journey through this valley of tears, to the heavenly Canaan, let them take a steady view of the difficulties and dangers which they are taught to expect upon the road; let them trace the sources of that uneasiness and disquietude, to which the best of Christians are frequently exposed, and as they proceed, apply to themselves the noble encouragement

pointed out by the text. "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

The first, and, I believe, the principal sources of the sincere Christian's heaviness and disquietude, are those remains of sin and corruption, which stain the purest breasts. Under the first glimmerings of grace, the first dawns of light and love upon the soul, the change from death to life is frequently so great and transporting, that the young, unpractised convert is lost in admiration. From the depths of his own misery and depravity, he is raised to such stupendous prospects of redeeming love, that, like the disciples on Mount Tabor, he is unwilling to quit the divine effulgence that surrounds him, to descend from the height of Gospel comfort, and to encounter the innumerable obstacles that await his progress in the world below. But when once the fervours of the first love are abated: when once the young candidate is called forth to testify his affection for his Saviour, by acts of obedience, patience, resignation, and fortitude, under temporal as well as spiritual trials and calamities—then it is, that the clouds begin to gather—the day of distress approaches—"His sins take such fast hold of him, that he is unable to look up." His secret corruptions start forth unexpectedly from every corner of his heart, and throw his whole soul into confusion. It is an attack for which he is unprepared; from a quarter which he little expected. Scarcely is he able to recollect his past experience, or if he does, it is not with a view to strengthen his faith, but to increase his dejection. In the full bitterness of his soul he is ready to exclaim with David, "O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me! when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness." If, indeed, I am still the child of God, "why go I thus heavily while the enemy oppresses me?" Such are the sad disquietudes which the latent remains of sin frequently awaken in the believer's breast: and many excellent Christians there are,

who go thus mourning occasionally, and disconsolate, to their graves; whilst others, after repeated conflicts, and repeated victories, obtain, at length, that sweet and steady assurance, which enabled the Apostle to declare, that “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, should separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.” As for those who are still mourning, and refuse to be comforted, who are continually expostulating with themselves in the plaintive language of the text,—“why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?” let us ask them whether the frame of their minds is in any respect similar to that of holy David? Do their “souls,” like his, “pant after their God, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks?” Are they athirst for “God, even the living God?” Are the desires of their hearts all centered in Christ Jesus? Do they wish to know him more fully, to serve him more faithfully, to love him more ardently, to receive the sanctifying influences of his Spirit here, in order to be qualified to dwell in everlasting communion with him hereafter? Is this, I say, the real state of their minds? *Then*, let them take comfort, and “hope in their God; for they shall yet praise *him*, who is the health of their countenance, and their God.”

But there are other sources of distress and disquietude to the sincere Christian, besides the latent corruptions of his own heart; for some of his severest trials are occasioned by the afflictive dispensations of Providence. Good and virtuous men are so far from being exempted from misfortunes and afflictions, that they are taught to expect a double portion of both. “For, whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth and chasteneth every son that he receiveth.” Under the immediate influence of these severe visitations, the “soul is, indeed, cast down and disquieted.” It can scarcely penetrate the gloom, with which its sorrows en-

compass it, or discover the potent arm that struck the blow and robbed it of its peace. Or, if it should see the will of God in the affliction, how hard to submit! to kiss the rod and bless the correcting hand! When dire disease spreads its fatal venom through the human frame, and robs us of the bloom of youth, and the comforts of health—when prosperity withdraws her smile, and poverty, with its attendant woes, advances like an armed man—when death snatches a bosomed friend, or beloved relative from our embraces—how difficult to adopt the language of humble submission: “It is the Lord’s will; let him do what seemeth him good.” The recollection of former prosperity and of all the spiritual and temporal blessings which an indulgent heaven has with profusion showered on our heads, serves only to give additional weight to the present load of grief, and deepen the melancholy that clouds and oppresses the soul. The eye of sorrow is perpetually looking back, and lamenting the loss of objects, in which the mistaken mind had fondly centered all its *felicity*. It rarely ventures to cast one eager look into the region of hope. It deems it impossible to convert a present *distress* into a present blessing; and can never conceive, that darkness itself should be the very medium through which the light of heaven must again be rendered visible to the benighted heart. In the moment of Job’s despondency, under the severest trials with which he was visited, he would have reasoned and spoken far otherwise than he did, had it suited the purposes of heaven to unveil at that moment the secret design of his present affliction. Had he discerned the angel that was “riding in the whirlwind”—had he beheld the hand “that directed the storm,” he would doubtless have changed the language of his exclamation. “O my soul,” he would then have said, though thou art “not as in months past, as in the days when God preserved thee;” yet have I a secret hope, that thou wilt soon feel again his reviving presence, and praise him for greater blessings

than thou hast heretofore received. So true it is, that dispensations, the most severe in appearance, if we could raise our thoughts for a few moments above the considerations of flesh and blood, would be regarded as dispensations of mercy. Medicines, we know, are seldom sweet or palatable; and yet, should we not thank our physician for administering them, when he knows they are necessary for the recovery of our health? And can Christians then repine, and be dissatisfied with their benevolent Saviour for mingling the bitter draught of affliction, when he foresees that their salvation, perhaps, depends upon the remedy? Every thing that ties us to the world, keeps us at a distance from God. Can he, therefore, more effectually testify his affection for us, than by occasionally breaking or loosening these cords, and thus abating our attachment to the world? Cease then, O Christian, to repine at thy lot! Be not cast down nor disquieted. Thy God hath *not forsaken* thee, but is only preparing thee for better times. "Hope thou in Him, for thou shalt yet praise Him, who is the health of thy countenance and thy God."

Lastly, the world in which he lives, and the persons with whom he is obliged to converse, administer fresh causes of sorrow and disquietude to the sincere Christian. The secret treachery of pretended friends, or the open malice of avowed enemies, the too general disrespect and contempt with which virtue and religion are treated, and the honours and encouragement bestowed upon vice, all conspire to wound his breast, and even tempt him to feel disgusted with the society of his fellow creatures. For who that feels the least spark of zeal for the honour of his God, can bear to hear his name blasphemed, and his religion ridiculed; to see his precepts violated with impunity, and his ordinances neglected and despised? And yet, to oppose these prevailing enormities, to testify an abhorrence of them by private reproofs, or public censures, is frequently deemed rudeness and impertinence. But let not

the children of God be discouraged on this account. Though placed in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, they may have reason to adopt the language of David, "Wo is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Meshech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar! O that I had the wings of a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest!" Though integrity, uprightness and the fear of God should be even banished from the abodes of men—though the Church of God should lie level with the dust, and the disciples of a crucified Saviour be ridiculed and reviled—yet, let them fear not, neither be dismayed! Their God still sits at the helm of the universe. Christ will still take care of his own; and, as for themselves, if, with Job, they be determined "to hold fast their righteousness, and not let it go, nor suffer their hearts to reproach them, so long as they live." If they hope in God, and trust in the Lord their Saviour, if the righteousness of Christ be their plea, and faith in him their impenetrable shield, be their outward circumstances in life what they may, let them be assured, that "they are still under the defence of the Most High, and *safe* under the shadow of *His wings*."

My brethren, the consciousness of security under the pressures and calamities of mortality; this solid foundation of cheering hope, is one of the chief excellencies of our holy religion. Dark and dismal, and leading to complete despondency, would the picture of human life appear to a reflecting mind, could not the eye of faith penetrate the gloom, and frequently behold it brightened with the rays of religious hope. Wretched, indeed, would be the creature man, were all his desires and felicities confined to the scanty and precarious enjoyments of his earthly existence. Well might his heart revolt instinctively from every aspect of human destiny. And alas! what better or more consolatory are all the prospects of philosophy? Not a syllable can be gathered from this boasted source of wisdom, to

bear us up under the weight of afflictions, by substantiating our hopes beyond the grave. From whatever we have hitherto learned, by all the discoveries of reason, a life chiefly marked by its shortness and sorrows, finally closes the scene, and terminates all that is, or can be, interesting to mortals, in uncertainty or oblivion. In fact, the highest powers of the human mind, unassisted by revelation, afford no satisfactory intelligence concerning the great objects of our hopes and our fears. The only authentic information derived from them is, that the present world is a scene of *suffering*, and not of unqualified enjoyment. Impelled, on the one hand, by the instigation of appetite, and checked, on the other, by the restraints of conscience, we are often the sport of both, and never in perfect subjection to either. Infancy is lost amidst a multitude of toys, tender anxieties, and abortive pursuits. Youth, amidst dreams of enjoyment, visionary imaginations, and all the teasing inquietudes of early sensibility. Manhood, amidst the vicissitudes of fortune, the requisitions of futurity, and the tortures of disappointment. And age, amidst all those languors of body and peevish dejections of mind, recollections painted with regret, and anticipations darkened by despondency; the pangs of a frame verging on dissolution, and a thousand solitudes big with apprehension, which cloud and darken the last periods of mortality. And what is there in all that the world can promise, that fancy can devise, or reason suggest, able to repress or soften these mortifying reflections? Were they dependent on the temperature of the atmosphere, or the aspects of fortune, on the humours of the body, or the caprices of the mind, like *common* ailments, they might admit of a *common* cure. But their causes are infinitely more deep, more extensive, and more affecting; they originate in solitudes which associate with all the best and last hopes of the heart, with the greatest and dearest interests of eternity. Now, under all these complicated and distressing evils, what sentiment, but that in

the text, can afford immediate and effectual relief? "Hope thou in God," my soul, "for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." This blessed hope, which is founded upon the infallible doctrines and unerring promises of revealed religion, and is connected intimately with the whole system of man's redemption, immediately raises and expands the heart by the discovery and full assurance of something in reserve, which will more than compensate all our present sufferings. This bears us up, and keeps our minds composed under every difficulty and affliction, and even gives strength and courage to look at death and the grave with coolness and tranquillity. It enables us to balance what we are with what we may yet be; the griefs which we bear, with the joys which we expect; the wants which we feel, with the inheritance which we have in view; the fleeting embarrassments of time, with the permanent and substantial enjoyments of eternity. The doubts which are entertained on this subject are endless, and, without faith, without complete reliance on the word of God, they would, indeed, be unanswerable. They demonstrate the petulance of the human understanding, which, and especially in matters of the highest moment, would always be *wise above what is written*. But, in what ought to affect every rational creature in proportion to the magnitude of the interests, which all have at stake, the important question with each of us is, what advantage can be derived from an obstinate rejection of the most consolatory truths, from a senseless neglect of this *great salvation*? Why thus anxiously meet, and realize a destiny which the strongest propensities of our nature impel us to avoid? Why regard those prospects and expectations with a suspicious eye, which correspond to all the warmest desires of our hearts? Why, as the prophet more forcibly urges the same affecting expostulation, "pursue lying vanity, and forsake your own mercy?"

Why, or for what, relinquish the prospects of a final state of happiness, to which all our purest propensities are directed, so adequate to all we wish and all we want ?

Forgive us, then, our ignorance and credulity, ye mighty adepts in human reason, who, in courtesy, style each other exclusively philosophers, and by conquering their prejudices, the best friends of mankind—pity, if you will, or laugh at the idea of the children of affliction animating their spirits to hope *in their God*. We resign to you the honours, the triumphs, the advantages of superior wisdom and sagacity—only inveigle us not into the same perplexities with yourselves, nor darken our minds with those dismal and portentous clouds which habitually settle upon your own. Continue to impeach the wisdom that governs the world, and the goodness that has made you what you are ; but impose not your opinions upon us, at the dreadful expense of our peace. We envy you not whatever satisfaction you may enjoy in the conviction, that there is neither *good* nor *evil*, nor any thing to alarm and allure, in the fears and hopes which agitate our hearts ; that the world is without a Maker, nature without a guide, life without design, sin without a Redeemer, and man, immersed as he is in misery, without redress. Suffer us to be ignorant and happy, and we leave you to be wise and wretched. While you, like the fowls of heaven, and the animals of the field, are satisfied to enjoy for a season the pleasures of a fleeting life, and yield, in your turn, to a succession of the same evanescent existence, we will presume, with humility and gratitude, that there is a period and place appointed and appropriated, by the moral government of God, where, in due time, we shall be as perfect as our regenerated nature and as blessed as redeeming love can make us. Let us in the mean time, indulge the pleasing and triumphant expectation, that in this kingdom of righteousness, where the heart will no longer be blinded with passion, nor the understanding darkened with doubts, we shall indeed behold

Him *face to face*, who is the *health* of our countenance and our God, and thus find all our hopes in him realized by enjoying the happiness which he has prepared for those who love him. To this happy result of things, the whole system and aspect of Christianity, in perfect unison with all our best and sublimest sentiments, are invariably directed. The more this blessed system is investigated and understood, the more clearly will it appear to be the only foundation of that *hope*, which is spoken of in the text. Many philosophers, indeed, have recommended a course of virtuous conduct from its intrinsic excellence, its influence on the happiness of society, from the hope of rewards, and the dread of punishments in another world. But all their reasonings are hypothetical—that is to say, they are founded upon a supposition, which reason alone can never substantiate. The arguments which they bring forward to instruct us in the momentous concerns of eternity, are so subtle, so indecisive, so equivocal, and their descriptions of the scenes to which they refer for the consummation of our hopes, or our fears, are so sensual and so low, that they have little or no effect on the lives and hearts of men. It is the prerogative of our divine Saviour alone to bring “life and immortality to light by the Gospel.” This glorious and godlike privilege, which dignifies and distinguishes our race, and bids us hope in our Creator as the *health of our countenance*, is not darkly insinuated, but clearly revealed; not hinted superficially in a few ambiguous phrases; but interwoven with all the doctrines of the Gospel, with all its precepts and all its promises, confirmed by the resurrection of its Divine Teacher from the dead, and exemplified by his accession, as our representative, and “forerunner to the right hand of the majesty on high.” Thus is he the salvation of all the ends of the earth, a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. His doctrine is “gold tried in the fire,” which “maketh rich and addeth no sorrow;” the balm which heals the wounded “in spirit,”

and the anchor of hope to wavering and inconstant mortals. His "grace is sufficient for us, and his strength is made perfect in our *weakness*;" his word is "a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path; and his name ever was and ever shall be, "precious to them that believe." Of such, each one may always say with the Psalmist, O my soul, "hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." And now to God the Father, &c. &c.

S E R M O N X X .

THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD.*

AND THEY WERE ALL FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST.—*Acts* ii. 4.

THE astonishing manner in which the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, and the extraordinary gifts which he conferred upon them, appear to be less surprising than the moral effect, the decided change which it produced in their hearts and conduct. He triumphed *in them*, over the spirit of the world, to which they had hitherto been subjected. As the Holy Spirit of *intelligence* and *wisdom*, he dispels the darkness, and corrects the mistakes occasioned by worldly prejudices. As the spirit of council and strength, he reanimates their courage, and banishes that pusillanimity and cowardice, which the world is apt to inspire. As the *spirit of devotion*, he deadens the ardours of worldly attachments, and kindles the pure and celestial fires of *divine love*. Is this triumph of God's Spirit realized in our hearts, my brethren? To the conscience of each individual it belongs, to answer candidly this question. But surely it can escape the observation of none of us, that ignorance and error, false shame and timidity, the love of pleasure, and the fascination of trifles, are very frequent and conspicuous among mortals, and that worldly-mindedness sways many a heart, which the Spirit of God is desirous of sanctifying. But, that I may not be accused of un-

[* This was the author's last sermon, preached in St. Mary's Church, Burlington, on Whitsunday, May 26, 1833.]

founded and professional declamation, permit me to aim at unfolding the ideas which, perhaps, you already entertain on this subject? The method I would pursue, is plain and obvious, and is simply this:—if your consciences tell you that God's Spirit creates in you a resemblance to the Apostles, then are you influenced by this Holy Spirit. But if you experience within yourselves a conformity with worldly men, destitute of the religious principle, or faintly cherishing it, then are you guided by the spirit of the world. To enable you to decide this important question, my intention is to show, in the *first place*, how the Spirit of God triumphed, in the Apostles, over the spirit of the world; and in the *second place*, how the spirit of the world banishes the Holy Ghost from the hearts of men. To the discussion of these two points, I solicit your attention at present, and may God accompany it with the most salutary impressions. And thou, O Holy Spirit, who by a prodigy peculiarly the effect of thy power, didst form in the Apostles new hearts and new desires, deign to descend upon this Christian assembly, and to renew among us this miracle of thy grace. Cause us to perceive distinctly, by what Spirit we are influenced, and if, indeed, the worldly spirit actually reign in our hearts, if thy enemies prevail there, O may this holy festival be the date of thy triumph; and of thy perpetual habitation among us!

I. The holy Scripture exhibits this world to us under the image of an *inconstant figure*, passing rapidly away. By this single line of the heavenly pencil, is represented to us the hateful group of frivolous desires, of deceitful hopes, of unjust animosities, of vicious attachments, which crowds the picture of human life. Here we see delineated the general principle of human actions; the fatal effects of that selfishness which forms the most prominent feature of a worldly spirit. We need not go far to look for proofs of the almost universal prevalence of this principle. We behold

it influencing the Apostles themselves. Men apparently but little calculated to figure in the world; trained moreover by the maxims of eternal *wisdom*. Witnesses of Christ's miracles, and taught by his example, still more powerfully than by his lessons, suffer themselves, nevertheless, to be fascinated by worldly principles. Although they be the followers and the companions of Jesus, we find them subject to many weaknesses of human nature. We find false zeal and bigotry, and a love of pre-eminence still rankling in their hearts. To the Holy Spirit it belongs to purify them. In this, his work is truly conspicuous. This admirable change can proceed only from him. For, who, in fact, are these men, whose conversation and conduct breathe nothing now but moderation and charity? Are they not the very same, who would lately have called down fire from heaven upon an unbelieving people? What is now become of that fiery and sanguinary zeal, which considered every difference in religious opinions as a sufficient ground for enmity and aversion? What are now the sons of *Zebedee*? how is their ambition converted into disinterested heroism? One of them,* after triumphing over the persecutions of the synagogue, gloriously sheds his blood in testimony of his mission: the other† has left it doubtful which we are most to admire, the example of his courage and charity, or the excellency of his writings. *Here* we behold Thomas proclaiming aloud the wonders which he had refused to believe. *There* Paul, from a persecutor, becomes a doctor of the Church; the Apostle and martyr of a religion, which he had been zealous to destroy. Emboldened by the Holy Ghost, he defies all the powers of heaven and earth to separate him from the love of his Saviour. What is now become of those men, who had cherished the flattering hopes of a brilliant fortune; who could not dissemble their impatient expectation of an earthly kingdom? See them now

[* James.]

[† John, the Evangelist.]

contemplating, with indifference, all the riches of the faithful deposited at their feet. Instead of that dastardly pusillanimity and cowardice, which induced *one* to deny, and *all* to abandon their Master, see them endued with unconquerable firmness, speaking with boldness, preaching with assurance, fearing God, but strangers to any other fear.* Like a torrent, which nothing can oppose; like a conflagration which nothing can extinguish,—they bear down all before them,—set at nought the world and its illusions,—idolatry and its false teachers,—tyrants and their torments,—death and its horrors. They proclaim *Him* aloud, whom they had ignominiously deserted. Such are the effects of the Holy Spirit upon teachable souls, upon hearts, which surrender themselves unreservedly to his impressions. If Christians should answer, that not being called to the ministry of God's word, to be the heralds of his doctrine, and martyrs to their religion, the same miraculous change is not to be expected in them, as took place in the Apostles, the answer is, that as *their* sanctification at least was the work of the Holy Ghost, so *ours* must flow also from the same sacred and powerful source. Those gifts of the Spirit, which tend to enlighten the understanding, to direct the will, to advance the soul in faith and holiness, are as necessary to us, as they could be to them. To *us* are these Scripture doctrines equally important: that “the Spirit of God must dwell in us;” and that, “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” That by this divine influence, “we are to be renewed in knowledge, after the image of him who created us,” and “to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, to the praise of the glory of his grace;” that “being thus made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,” we shall sleep in the Lord. Equally important is it for us to know, that our heavenly Father “will surely give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.”

[* “Je crains Dieu, cher Abner, et je n'ai d'autre craint.”—RACINE.]

But should we pass over in silent admiration the exclusive and miraculous prerogatives conferred by the Holy Ghost upon the first preachers of the Gospel, how can we sufficiently admire the prodigies of grace wrought by the same Spirit, in the primitive Christians? They were not all destined to spread the light of faith among idolatrous nations, consequently were not all appointed to be Apostles, but *all* were called to be saints, and many became so in effect; that is to say, men detached in a great measure from the goods of fortune, willingly sharing their property with the wretched; full of active sensibility, at the sight of human misery. Men united among themselves, in the bonds of holy friendship and disinterested charity. Men of real candour, moderation and forbearance, aiming at nothing so earnestly as to prove themselves the disciples of Jesus, by being always of one heart and one soul: men truly religious, punctual and assiduous, in meeting together for the purposes of prayer, and breaking of bread: men who mortified and subdued their vicious propensities; who had crucified to themselves the world, with all its lusts and vanities. Men and women, in a word, such as we ought to be, my brethren, who believe the same truths, profess the same religion, aspire to the same happiness; such, as I trust, many faithful souls are, even at this day: for who will presume to say, that the *arm of the Lord is shortened* at present? Because the Holy Ghost is no more manifested in the power and splendour of miraculous communications, shall we assert that his gifts no longer descend upon souls duly prepared to receive them? No; my trust is, that the Spirit of the Lord has not withdrawn himself entirely from among us. At the present most frivolous and unbelieving, if not the most profligate period in the annals of Christianity, he triumphs still in many faithful souls, over the spirit of the world. Think not, that no faith is now to be found on the earth. I trust that even in the bosom of this Church, the Lord looks down with complaisance upon many, who ap-

proach the throne of mercy in full confidence and certain hope of finding acceptance there, and peace to their souls. He hears them vowing universal obedience to his laws, and will be a witness to their exertions to comply with their engagements. Their life is, indeed, a constant struggle against sin : their enemies are formidable ; the issue of the conflict is frequently doubtful, and, when they are left to themselves, it is generally fatal. But, “ they are more than conquerors in him that strengthens them.” Then it is, that those firm and intrepid characters are exhibited to the world, who, having been proved in the crucible of afflictions, show themselves worthy of Christ by their resignation and constancy. O reason ! O philosophy ! what wretched comforters are ye, in anguish and in pain ? But how do these soften down and become tolerable, as soon as God’s Spirit makes haste to support us ? “ His grace sufficeth me,” says the Apostle, “ his virtue is perfected in our weakness.”

II. I could wish to conclude this discourse, by leaving on your minds these agreeable impressions ; or if, warmed by the delightful objects which present themselves to our view, I might be willing to exhibit them in all their excellence, before you, how should I rejoice in celebrating, with you, the universal triumph of our sanctifier and God ? But, alas ! a spectacle of a different nature too often draws off our attention, and it is disgusted with the obtrusive sight of the worldly spirit, triumphing in many, who call themselves Christians. The plan of this discourse, and the duties of my office, compel me to lay before you these melancholy truths.

Let us open our eyes, my brethren, and notwithstanding our repugnance to such an inquiry, let us contrast Christianity at its birth, with what it now is. By the *Spirit of God*, the whole universe was induced to submit to the cross of Christ. By the *Spirit of the world*, Christians are

seduced from the sweet yoke of their Redeemer. True it is, they no longer offer sacrifices to idols, but their passions. Pride, avarice, vengeance, voluptuousness, unlawful love, and unjust hatred, are so many divinities to whom they sacrifice, with lavish prodigality ; not indeed empty incense, or bleeding victims, but their consciences, their tranquillity, and the eternal interests of their souls. The same wonders of Providence, which are now shining before our eyes, formerly rendered the Pagans submissive to God's call, and the constancy of the martyrs converted multitudes to Christianity, while they sealed with their blood the very doctrines which we profess. This was one great engine in the hands of Providence for throwing the rays of the Gospel over the darkness of Paganism. But these same motives, alas ! make no further impression on many, who at this day enjoy the full blaze of Gospel evidence. Instead of appreciating these motives, many affect to despise them. They busy themselves in scrutinizing what they ought to submit to, they prefer perplexing doubts to luminous conviction ; and irreligious conversations, which would have shocked their fathers, are become familiar to some, and agreeable to many. We must not, therefore, be surprised, if carrying our inquiries still farther, we find so much difference between the morals of the primitive and modern Christians. In the former, nothing was more conspicuous than self-denial and innocency ; in the latter, one of the most prominent features is criminal, or at least luxurious indulgence. The former were remarkable for their moderation and modesty ; the latter too often become criminal lovers of riches and worldly parade. After the coming down of the Holy Ghost, the forgiveness of injuries, and the love even of enemies were deemed necessary virtues ; at present, they are cowardice, insensibility, and baseness. How has the simplicity of the first disciples been succeeded by destructive refinements ! What cold religious apathy has taken place of *their* zeal for God's worship ! We profess

the same faith as they did ; let us then live as they did, allowance being made for the different states of society. Let us not suffer our affections to be entangled or engrossed by the sentiments, language, or maxims of the world ; let us be always upon our guard against its customs, its pleasures, its corruption, and its spirit. But, to be more particular on this subject, and to check, if possible, the recurrence of the formidable scourges which have often laid waste the heritage of the Lord, let us endeavour to discover by what means the spirit of the world could obtain this universal sway. To three circumstances, I conceive, may this worldly prevalence be principally ascribed. In the *first place*, to the evil example of the multitude ; *secondly*, to false views and erroneous interpretations of the Gospel ; and, *thirdly*, to cowardly apprehensions of a species of persecution, which generally attends sincere and devout Christians.

I say, *first*, that the pernicious example of a great multitude of Christians powerfully promotes the wicked influence of the world. While the number of Christians was inconsiderable, the Spirit of God ruled in them, with full energy : relaxation was introduced, and increased with numbers. In a multitude are always to be found, many soft, pusillanimous, tepid and unbelieving souls. Countenanced by these, vice soon loses the horror, which it would otherwise inspire in virtuous minds. Men are naturally pleased to find in the weaknesses of others, an excuse for their own. The guilty are emboldened by the number of transgressors, and thus the disgrace, if not the remorse of sin, is effectually done away. Wherefore, if Christians would cherish and preserve the communications of the Holy Ghost, they must keep aloof from a seducing world ; for experience has often pronounced that a flight of this kind is the only road to victory ; they must form to themselves a kind of solitude even amidst the ordinary occupations of life, a beloved retreat, which nothing should induce them to quit but necessary business, or the calls of social intercourse.

Where the Spirit of God dwells, there is no room for idleness. In the calm walks of retirement, is his influence chiefly felt. They who wish to experience it, must shun those seducing characters, whose society might draw them into dangerous amusements ; into criminal excesses, which the heart may approve, though religion condemn them : they must flee from the tempter, even when he smiles under the disguise of friendship. They must cherish no connexion between their hearts and the world ; they must use, without abusing the pleasures of life, and avoid too great an attachment, even to the choicest blessings of Providence ; they must never forget, that the present is a state of trial, if not of banishment, and, consequently, an object not worthy of our whole attention ; but, on the contrary, that the portion of our affections allotted to worldly matters, should be only commensurate to this short period of our existence.

I said, *secondly*, that the world increases the number of its victims by erroneous interpretations of the Gospel. The Holy Ghost, as Christ had promised, led the Apostles *into all truth*. Soon afterwards, however, modifications were sought for, as men could with difficulty persuade themselves that the Son of God had condemned so positively what they loved, and approved what they disliked. If we examine the conversation and behaviour of worldly men, they appear evidently to be in possession of some other Gospel, than that which we profess to be the rule of our faith and conduct. The maxims of the Holy Ghost are too troublesome, too much opposed to their tastes and habits, not to displease them. They cannot adopt them, and follow, at the same time, the propensities which they condemn. They find it, nevertheless, impossible to abolish these maxims altogether, so that nothing remains but to bend them as much as they can to the level of the passions, and thus it is, that the great variety of opinions which prevails on moral subjects, arises solely from a depravation of manners.

Amidst such a variety and uncertainty of bold and doubtful systems, in which worldly men are wandering, at a venture, like vessels without rudders, at the mercy of the winds, the Christian, guided by the Spirit of God, finds a safe anchoring ground in the Gospel of Christ. By its invariable precepts let our conduct be regulated. Let us not modify these precepts to gratify our passions, at the expense of our consciences. The first Christians were not afraid of doing too much for their Master. They knew that the slightest tampering with vice, frequently terminates in the most criminal excesses. When men once begin to interpret a perspicuous law, they wish to shake off its sanction. When once they begin to fix the precise limits of sin, they lose that delicacy of conscience, which secures the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in their hearts. To compound with the world, argues a disposition to love it.

Lastly, this worldly-mindedness is nourished and maintained by the dread of a certain kind of persecution, excited by lukewarm Christians against those who refuse to follow their example. Fewer have become apostates from the terrors of death, than the dread of ridicule has made unbelievers. This abject deference to opinion weakens the sentiments of nature, effaces the principles of education, and stifles the upbraidings of conscience. Under the pretext of avoiding the imputation of singularity, we approve and cherish the maxims of a sinful or frivolous world. To this third class of enemies, what arms can the Christian oppose, who wishes to preserve the influence of God's Spirit? He must oppose the fear of God, which will ever remain the leading duty of man. We dread the censures of the world, for the most part, very unjust in its decisions. Let us rather dread being condemned by the Lord. Contrast the testimony of that Being who sounds the *hearts and the reins*, with the decisions of a blind multitude; the sentence of God, the *righteous Judge*, with that of the most prejudiced and incompetent tribunal. What folly to pay

such deference to the opinions of men, when the whole universe cannot withdraw us from the authority of God ! What folly to suffer a base complaisance, a chimerical apprehension, to stifle in us the most rational and salutary fear ! O, my brethren, before you fix your choice between the Spirit of God, and that of the world, call to mind what you are yourselves, and what you would dare to reject. Remember, that as men and Christians, you are called on to be holy. This is your duty as men, for as such, the Supreme Being has a claim upon your worship, and what worship can honour him, but innocency of life ? He listens, indeed, to the supplications of the guilty, but not till penitential tears bespeak the sincerity of their repentance. But, it is on the score of our being Christians, that we are chiefly required to be holy. This is the glorious character by which Christianity is distinguished. In men totally abandoned to worldly pleasures and pursuits, can we recognize the disciples of the Holy of Holies ? “ *He* believes not in Jesus Christ, who does not keep his commandments.”

Consider, then, what you are, my brethren ; persons consecrated to the Holy Ghost in baptism, by the most solemn engagements, which some of you are about to renew this day, by complying with a sacred and positive command of our Lord. May the spirit of wisdom bring us acquainted with the real enemies of our souls, and enable us, by prudent, and occasional retreats, from the occupations, and absolute renunciation of the criminal follies of the world, to secure to ourselves an effectual asylum against every dangerous maxim of mere human wisdom, so frequently the sources of the most fatal illusions. May the fear of God dissipate that servile timidity which holds men so frequently in the bondage of sin. In a word, may the Holy Spirit deign to perfect in us his own work,—occupy in our hearts the place which is due to him alone, and so invigorate them with his sacred presence, that they may henceforth admit no competitor with him. May the sacred dews of his hea-

venly wisdom extinguish those profane flames which cause such fatal ravages in the human heart, and make room for that pure and heavenly flame of divine love, which Jesus Christ came to kindle upon the earth ; and may the Holy Spirit deign to sanctify, on this day, all Christians, who, under his sacred influence, shall resolve so to live continually in this world, that they may reign with him eternally in the next. And now, &c. &c.

SELECTED PAPERS.

A

SHORT AND CANDID INQUIRY

INTO THE

PROOFS OF CHRIST'S DIVINITY;

IN WHICH DR. PRIESTLY'S HISTORY OF OPINIONS CONCERNING CHRIST, IS

OCCASIONALLY CONSIDERED.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

BY CHARLES H. WHARTON, D. D.

WILMINGTON:

1791.

A SHORT INQUIRY, &c.

HAVING long accustomed myself to mistrust the prejudices of early education, and to pay that deference to modern researches after truth to which they are so justly entitled, from the philosophic and inquisitive spirit of the times, I have been induced to employ this winter's retirement and relaxation from business, in taking a survey of the leading doctrines of the Christian religion. With this view, I have perused with attention, several modern writers of eminence upon religious controversies, who affect, or possess the fame of candid inquiry; and although the boldness of some of them in rejecting the most received doctrines of Christianity, startled me at first, yet reflecting that the explosion of manifest absurdities, has often the same effect upon minds bewildered in the mazes of prejudice, it served rather to whet than blunt the edge of eager investigation. It has ever been my settled opinion, that there can be no stronger symptom of a little and grovelling mind, especially in persons of education and science, than a torpid indifference to truths that interest the noblest portion of our nature, occasioned by a total effusion of the affections upon this perishable world. Persons of this cast must either disbelieve their existence in a future state of being, or be censured as unwise, in disregarding doctrines that point to a happy or miserable *hereafter*.

On the other hand, when a sincere and keen solicitude for the most sublime and interesting truths, engages the mind in perplexing doubts and obscure researches, until rewarded for its labours, it basks at length in the delicious blaze of security and conviction, then may we pronounce such a mind the perfection of the rational nature, and an object of complacency to God and men. It was this laudable spirit of inquiry, this disposition to fathom the divine truths of religion, as far as weak reason is suffered to penetrate, that confirmed the esteem I have long conceived for you, and raised it to the name and dignity of friendship. Under the sanction of this endearing quality, I shall venture to send you a few pages on a subject which was started in one of our late conversations: in which you observed, that a person of leisure, and some theological knowledge, might be of service to religion, by re-calling the attention of Christians to the principal arguments which have been used in this controversy, and which cannot be unseasonable at a time when the Unitarian writers are making such efforts in America.

The task I undertake is awful and intricate, and the subject of such dignity and importance, that from the birth of Christianity, to the present day, it has furnished matter of unwearied disquisition and rapturous meditation to the inquisitive philosopher, and the pious ascetic. A subject of all others the most solemn and sublime, and of which we should endeavour to form the most definite and precise ideas; as an error concerning the object of religious worship, must lead to idolatry on the one hand, or to Atheism on the other. After the volumes that have been written to evince the divinity of Christ, it would be presumption in me to hope that any new argument to this effect, will occur in this letter. All that I can do is to concentrate to a focus, the most distinguishing rays, which the two great luminaries, Revelation and History, throw upon this subject, to bring them in review before the minds of those,

who have seen the former arguments of the Unitarians, of the Arians, and Socinians, brought forward with all the pomp and ornament of this philosophic age, and have wondered that no attempt has been made, in this country, to uphold what has ever been deemed the Catholic belief.

Wherefore, with the utmost diffidence in my own abilities, and under a strong impression, lest the cause of truth should suffer, by my yielding imprudently to the solicitations of friendship ; I proceed without further apology, to the subject in question ; in the discussion of which, my mind, I trust, has neither been seduced by prepossession, nor embittered with the venom of dogmatical vehemence. The day is happily past, when the fierceness of a disputant, and the versatility of a sophist, were deemed necessary ingredients of controversial contention ; and the rage of disputation would be an awkward seasoning for arguments, designed to combat the cool and dispassionate Dr. Priestly.

As reason could never have suggested the idea of God becoming man, and appearing among us in the human form, this doctrine could have originated only from information derived immediately from God himself, or from men commissioned by him to proclaim it. We must begin, therefore, by acknowledging that this controversy must be determined by the testimony of those writings which Christians admit to be the word of God, and by the practice and opinions of the Christian Church, which immediately took place upon the publication of these writings. If the divinity of Jesus Christ can be clearly evinced from the manifest coincidence of this two-fold testimony, then must this controversy be at an end, at least among those who receive the New Testament as the word of God.

That such a coincidence of testimony respecting the divinity of Jesus Christ, does appear in the New Testament, and in the opinions and practice of the Christian Church immediately after its publication, is what I am

strongly convinced of myself, and the ground of this conviction I now submit to the consideration of my friend.

It is evident through the whole economy and publication of the Gospel, that the Almighty employed the usual methods of his Providence, in paying due attention to times and circumstances, and mercifully condescended to dispose mankind to a gradual admission of astonishing truths, which, by a premature and precipitate obtrusion, would have shocked or confounded all the faculties of reason. Christ's whole conduct was marked with the caution of a person who had many things to say, even to his most intimate friends, which, as yet, they were not able to bear. He accordingly began his mission by inculcating to the Jews that he was the promised Messiah, and this belief was at first deemed sufficient, both by him and his Apostles, to initiate that people into the Christian Church; on the other hand, as the Gentiles knew but little or nothing of a Messiah, the Apostles confined their first preaching among them, to a few simple objects, suitable to their situation. Their exhortations and instructions went chiefly to draw them from the worship of idols to that of the living God; to induce them to receive Jesus of Nazareth as a prophet sent from him, to obey his laws and confide in his promises. They who made a sincere and open profession of this belief, were baptized and admitted into the society of the faithful. Within these limits was the Christian profession for some time confined, neither requiring of the Gentiles a plenitude of faith, nor of the Jews an absolute renunciation of their law. In proportion to the progress of the Gospel, the Apostles unveiled more fully, both to the Jews and Gentiles, the leading doctrines of the Christian religion, until, at length, by their preaching and ministry, all "the counsel of God was declared:"* that is, whatever things are to be believed and performed, in order to obtain eternal

* Acts xx. 20, 22, 27. Gal; i. 8.

life, under this new law and Gospel dispensation. It will be necessary to dwell a little on the commencement and progress of these original doctrines.

It appears manifest, as I mentioned before, from the Evangelical history, that the first thing which Christ required of the Jews, was their acknowledgment of his being the promised Messiah. By this belief alone, they became his proselytes and disciples. This was Peter's faith, when he declared Jesus to be "the Christ, or Messiah, and the Son of God."* This profession Martha made, when Jesus was about to raise her brother Lazarus from the dead.† In a word, this was the faith of Nathaniel and the Apostles;‡ this the end and intention of all the miracles of Christ, that they should evince and confirm his claim to the title of Messiah, and proclaim aloud, that this is life eternal, viz. "that men know the only true God, and Jesus, the Messiah, whom he hath sent."§ This fundamental doctrine of the Christian profession, St. Paul establishes, and repeats afterwards, in his first epistle to the Corinthians.|| "For other foundation," says he, "can no man lay, than that is laid," which is Jesus Christ, (or the Messiah.)

Such being the only profession of faith required of the Apostles, it does not appear that Christ's divinity was known to any of them before his resurrection,¶ nor indeed before his ascension into heaven, and the coming down of the Holy Ghost upon them, who was to testify of him and to glorify him, by disclosing that admirable mystery of his Godhead, which the human frailty of the Apostles was not yet able to bear.** I will admit, moreover, that no passage in the Gospel occurs to me at present, in which Christ expressly declares himself to be God. However, when Thomas applied this appellation unto him, exclaiming in his presence, and "saying unto him, my Lord and my

* Matt. xvi. 16. † John x. 27. ‡ John i. 45, 49. § John xvii. 3.

|| 1 Cor. iii. 11. ¶ Mark xvi. 11, 13, 14. Luke xxiv. 21.

** John xvi. 22, 13, 14.

God,"* we do not find that Jesus corrected him. And, indeed, the Jews appear to have understood Christ in the same sense, when they accused him "of making himself equal to God,"† and yet he offered no apology for expressions, which, if he was not God, they conceived to be highly blasphemous. In another place, he institutes the form of baptism to be "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."‡ He commands "all men to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."§ In a word, he declares, that "all things that the Father hath are his."|| It must be acknowledged by every candid reader, that these texts, though perhaps not conclusive, carry with them a great weight of evidence; nor is it possible to account for the silence of the Great Teacher of righteousness and truth, if he perceived that his discourses had led his hearers into so monstrous an error.

Moreover, the miracles of Christ were performed in a very different manner from those which were afterwards wrought by the Apostles. They all seem to denote the immediate power and authority of God. "Let there be light," said the Almighty, in old times, "and there was light." "I will, be thou clean," said Christ to the leper, "and immediately his leprosy was cleansed."¶ To the paralytic man he says, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house, and he arose and departed to his house."** During a violent storm, we find him "rebuking the wind, and saying unto the sea, peace, be still! and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."†† Now these expressions hold out no idea of a vicarious or delegated power. They sound like the commands of the supreme God himself. And indeed it is more than probable that he declared his divinity in the famous conference which he held with his Apostles after his resurrection, when beginning at "Moses and all

* John xx. 28.

† John v. 18.

x. 30 and seq.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 19.

§ John v. 22.

|| John xvi. 15.

¶ Matt. viii. 3.

** Matt. ix. 6, 7.

†† Mark iv. 39.

the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.”* To these things the Holy Spirit was afterwards to bear ample testimony, and bring them back to the recollection of the Apostles, whom he was to teach, moreover, whatever else was necessary to the full and complete establishment of the Christian doctrine. It is only from the preaching and writings of the Apostles, that we can learn what was declared to them by the Spirit of Truth, and therefore we must make them the next object of our inquiry.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we read the history of the infant Church, containing, as it were, the first rudiments and outlines of the Christian religion. When proclaiming these to the world, besides the original tenet of Jesus being the Messiah, the Apostles added the other of his resurrection, and of the remission of sins to those who should repent and believe. They afterwards delivered a third article of their creed, viz. a future judgment to be held by Jesus Christ. Nor do I recollect any other fundamental doctrine delivered in their several discourses to the Jews and Gentiles. However, we may soon run over the principal heads of them. The first is of St. Peter, in the second chapter, where, besides his prophecies, signs, and miracles,† he instances Christ’s resurrection and ascension, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit as proofs of the Christian religion.‡ The people being moved to compunction of heart by his discourses, “said unto him, and the rest of the Apostles, men and brethren what shall we do”§ to be reconciled to God, and to obtain salvation? “Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” The next discourse of Peter was delivered in Solomon’s porch,||

* Luke xxiv. 27.

† v. 22.

‡ v. 32, 33, 36.

§ Peter, v. 37.

|| Chap. iii. 7.

after he had healed the man who was lame from his mother's womb, and had commanded him, "in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, to rise up and walk." This man was well known by the people; as his constant station was at one of "the gates of the temple."* When, therefore, they beheld him "leaping and walking, they were filled with wonder and amazement," and this circumstance afforded a favourable opportunity to Peter, for addressing them as follows: "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glorified his son Jesus, whom ye delivered up."† And v. 22, 23, he proceeds: "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." Here he proclaims Christ to be the promised Messiah, but as yet no mention is made of his divinity. The impression made on his hearers by this discourse, was very considerable, and accordingly, the high priests, with the rulers and scribes, being assembled in council, the day after, summoned Peter and the others before them, and asked them, "by what power, or by what name have ye done this."‡ Then Peter said unto them, "be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole—neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." All this, we see relates to Jesus the Messiah. That he was the prophet who was foretold and promised,

* Peter, v. 10. v. 12, 13.

† Chap. iv. 7, &c.

‡ v. 10, &c.

Stephen, the first martyr, also confessed;* and Paul, soon after his conversion, taught publicly in the synagogues of Damascus, that Jesus was the Messiah, and the son of God.† After delivering these doctrines to the Jews, we find Paul and Barnabas opening their mission, and announcing the saving tidings of the Gospel to the Gentiles.‡ At Antioch in Pisidia, St. Paul declared, that Jesus the Saviour had risen from the dead, and “through him he preached forgiveness of sins.” Afterwards at Philippi, he and his companion Silas, were falsely accused of raising a sedition, “cast into prison, and fastened in the stocks.”§ But at midnight, “the foundations of the prison were shaken by an earthquake,” the doors flew open, and Paul and Silas were “loosed from their bands. The keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, fell down at their feet and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” He and his family were accordingly baptized into this faith. Sometime after this, Paul preached publicly in the Synagogues at Thessalonica, that Jesus is the Messiah; and that it was necessary he should “suffer and rise again from the dead.”||

At Athens he was regarded by the Philosophers, as “a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.”¶ But when he “stood in the midst of” the Areopagus, he repeated the substance of the discourse which he had formerly delivered at Lystra, exhorting them to abandon their idols, and worship the only living God, the Lord of Heaven and earth. But before he concludes, he informs them, that God “had appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him

* Acts vii. 37. † ix. 20, 22. ‡ Chap. xiii. 23, 33, 37, 38.

§ Chap. xvi. 30, 31. || xvii. 3. ¶ v. 18.

from the dead.”* Departing from Athens, St. Paul went to Corinth, where, in the synagogues, he earnestly proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah.† And when the Jews raised a violent opposition to his doctrine, shaking his raiment, he said unto them, “your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.” And in order to evince his zeal and diligence in propagating these great doctrines, he assembles the elders of Ephesus at Miletus, and there desires them to bear witness, how he had “testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.”‡ The same faith in Christ and of a future judgment, he afterwards professed openly before Felix§ who sent him to King Agrippa, in whose presence, after relating some particulars of his life and mission, he declares, that “having obtained help of God he continued until that day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come, that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles.”|| In a word, in a solemn meeting of the Jews at Rome, he expounded to them Moses and the Prophets as bearing testimony to Jesus, and for the space of two years continued to teach “those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ;”¶ doctrines which he afterwards sealed with his blood in the capital of the world.

We have now taken a cursory view of the chief doctrines of Christianity, which occur in the Acts of the Apostles. They are doubtless fundamental doctrines, and such as essentially affect the whole economy of the Gospel. Besides the existence of one supreme God, the Apostles taught repeatedly, that the Holy Ghost was sent by him,

* Acts, v. 31. † Chap. xviii. 5. 6. ‡ xx. 17, 21. § xxiv. 24.
 || xxvi. 22, 23. ¶ xxviii. 31.

and that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah ; that this same Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven. They proclaimed moreover the remission of sins in his name, the resurrection of the dead, to which his own bore testimony, and life everlasting through faith in him. Now if these heads of the Christian doctrine be compared with the articles of what is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, they appear to comprehend all those which are of primitive and original authority. For, as to what is mentioned in that symbol, concerning Christ's "descent into hell," the "Catholic Church," or the "communion of saints," it seems not to rest upon the sanction either of such high antiquity, or such unquestionable authority, and I believe it would be difficult to show that any essential doctrines were preached publicly by the Apostles, either to the Jews or Gentiles, besides those which have been mentioned, during the period to which the history of their transactions relates. I say publicly ; in the mean time, however, they daily paid religious worship to Jesus Christ, they performed miracles, and baptized in his name ; and we read that Stephen, in the agonies of death, called upon the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit.* Now the reasons which induced the Apostles, to be so cautious in mentioning Christ's divinity if we may hazard a conjecture appear to be these. They were apprehensive, lest the Jews might be scandalized by the slightest appearance of Polytheism. For it is not probable, that this people conceived their Messiah would be God, and therefore when they imagined that Christ had asserted himself to be so, they were for stoning him to death as a blasphemer.† And it was, perhaps, this mistake of theirs, that induced the Ebionites, the Nazarenes, and other sects of Jewish Christians, to call in question and deny Christ's divinity, at the same time that they received him for their promised Messiah.

* Acts, vii. 59.

* John. x. 30, 31, 34.

As to the Gentiles, they were to be brought to renounce Polytheism, and to worship one only All-perfect Deity. Great circumspection and prudence were therefore necessary, gradually to unveil the high mystery of the Godhead, lest the Christian system should appear to involve those very contradictions which they were exhorted to renounce. The Apostles therefore judged proper to wait till the minds of men should be disposed, without violence, to bear the "whole counsel" of God, and to receive, without too great a shock, a full and open declaration of every article of our faith. And this declaration was made in the most explicit manner by St. John, in his Gospel and Revelations, and by the other Apostles in their canonical Epistles; writings which finish and complete the Christian system, containing the whole code of a Christian's practice and belief. As it is in these writings that Christ's divinity seems clearly revealed, it will be necessary to give special attention to their evidence.

The history of the Acts of the Apostles conclude with Paul's arrival at Rome, which is supposed to have happened about sixty years after the birth of Christ. The Gospel of St. John was not published at this time, nor were many of the Apostolical epistles yet written. It is necessary, therefore, to inquire briefly, what doctrines are contained in these writings, which the Apostles hitherto had not explicitly declared. To bear ample testimony to Christ's divinity, seems to have been the chief object of St. John in writing his Gospel. He sets out by declaring the pre-existence of the *Logos*, proclaims him to be God, and the Creator of the universe.* In many passages of his Revelation, he repeats this doctrine in the clearest words that language can furnish.† He styles Jesus Christ the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the *beginning* and the *end*, intimating thereby, his eternal pre-existence and duration. He as-

* John, i. 1, 2, 3.

† Rev. i. 8, xxi. 3, 6, 7. iv. v. &c. &c.

scribes to Christ the very attributes, under which the Eternal, in other passages of Scripture, designates his own essence. "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel and his Redeemer the Lord of Hosts, I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God."* In a word, there is scarcely a prerogative, or a property of the Divinity, which this Apostle does not attribute to the Redeemer, and he is full and explicit in exhibiting him as the object of Divine worship to the celestial inhabitants.† It appears to me, that the most zealous advocate for Christ's Divinity, would find it difficult to adopt a more pointed language, a more explicit phraseology, or a greater perspicuity of expression, than that which St. John makes use of upon this subject. And yet the Apostle Paul in several of his Epistles, seems, if possible, to have announced this mystery with still greater accuracy, and to have thrown around it a blaze of evidence, still more powerful and conclusive. To select the most proper words for conveying his meaning with energy and precision, he appears to have exhausted the copious language of the Greeks. He styles him, "the irradiation of his glory, and the character, or the express form of the substance of God:" or, as our Bible translates it, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person."‡ He calls him, repeatedly, the Creator of all things,§ and lest this should not be sufficient to designate his divinity, he tells us,|| that "he who built," or made, "all things, is God;" from which premises no other conclusion can possibly follow, than that Christ is God."¶ Without denying the authority of St. Paul, and of the ancient Prophets; who were unanimous in alleging the character of Creator, as an essential quality of the God-

* Isaiah, xviv. 6, xci. 4. xlviii. 12.

† Rev. v. 13.

‡ Heb. i. 3.

§ Ibid. iii. 10.

|| Heb. iii. 4.

¶ He says that the whole plenitude of the Deity, dwells corporeally in him, not as in a shadow, figure, or representation, but *vitally* as the soul dwells in the body. Col. xxi. 2.

head* can human subtlety elude the force of the following argument: "He who made all things is God ; but Christ made all things ; therefore Christ is God." St. Paul seems to dwell with peculiar complacency on Christ's quality of Creator, without the remotest hint at any delegated power in his mighty work. "By him," says he, speaking of Christ, "were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible ; whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers : all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."† In thus designating Christ as the *Universal Creator*, the Apostle effectually obviates the cavils, which in after times have been suggested against this glorious prerogative. Some, with the learned Dr. Price, have regarded him only as a partial Creator, the Angel who created and superintends this visible world ; while the Unitarians, with the celebrated Dr. Priestly, denying his pre-existence, must consider him merely as a metaphorical and moral Creator, who by his sanctity and miracles, reformed the human race, and created in men new hearts and affections. Let any man compare these opinions with the words just quoted, and if in these he shall discover the character of an universal Creator, both of the celestial, terrestrial, and intellectual world, he must relinquish the school of such philosophical divines, or openly renounce the authority of the text : I must candidly own, that I see no alternative. It would be needless to mention every passage in the Scriptures in which the appellation and attributes of God, are ascribed to Jesus Christ. They may be found in every author who has written fully on this subject, and I have only mentioned such as appear most explicit, as they may serve as a foundation for a short series of reasoning which I mean to adopt in the sequel of this letter. There

* Isaiah, xlii. 5. xliv. 24. Jer. x. 11, 12.

† Cols. i. 16,

is one passage, however, so very explicit, that I cannot omit setting it down in this place, as it seems to comprehend every thing that could be declared on this subject. "Without doubt," says St. Paul writing to Timothy, chap. iii. 16, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Here is a declaration that would be sufficient to establish this mystery of godliness, had no other been handed down to us by divine revelation. I would just observe, moreover, that the word *Kurios* which is constantly applied to Christ in the New Testament, is always used by the Septuagint, to render the Hebrew word Jehovah in the Old, as Isaiah xiii. 14; Jer. xxiii. 6; Zach. x. 14, &c. &c.

I have now laid before my friend, the principal passages of the New Testament, which are alleged to evince the divinity of Christ. It is not my intention to obviate the objections that have been made to each of them by the adversaries of this doctrine, nor to consider the various interpretations they have adopted, in order to reconcile them to the Socinian and Unitarian systems: this would be launching at once into the wide ocean of controversy. Instead of elucidating, it might perplex the simplicity of this truth. With those who admit it, it wants no commentary, as they confess it to be a mystery, and therefore not an object of human discussion.

The whole question turns upon a matter of fact, which is simply this, *is Christ's divinity revealed in the Scriptures?* Do the texts which I have quoted, in their natural and obvious meaning, point out this truth, so as to leave it impressed upon the mind of the reader, who has previously admitted them to be the word of God? Would not such a reader be justifiable in asserting, that if he be mistaken in conceiving Christ to be God, and worshipping him as such, this deception, so far from being voluntary, must be absolutely unavoidable? I would ask, moreover, whe-

ther it be reasonable to suppose, that in speaking of the primary object of all religion, which is the worship of the Deity, the language of revelation should be so ambiguous, obscure, and deficient, as to involve an erroneous idea of his nature? Nor can it be said, that a want of proper attention to the true meaning of these passages, has occasioned this mistake concerning the nature of God: for no fact can be more notorious, than that men of the greatest erudition, penetration, and candour, have pondered these texts in every point of view, which they can possibly present, and have ultimately acknowledged, that without offering manifest violence to the common terms of language, their meaning can be no other, than the generality of Christians have ever affixed to them. To lead men into an error so derogatory to God's own glory, so fatal to themselves, by modes of expression that can have no other literal meaning, must be totally inconsistent with the plan of mercy and truth held forth in the Gospel. Accurate and explicit ideas of the Divinity are the basis of religion, and if Christ were not God indeed, his inspired Apostles would not have spoken of him in a language that must induce mankind to believe him to be so, and to establish this doctrine through all succeeding generations. For it will appear, hereafter, that it was generally believed in the Apostolic age, and has been professed to the present period, by a very great majority of Christians, and it is from this primitive belief of the Christian Church, that an argument arises which completes the testimony mentioned in the beginning of this letter.

The best comment on the meaning of any controverted passage in the New Testament must be looked for in the belief and practice of the primitive Church, and the strongest presumption arises in favour of a tenet, which comes recommended by such powerful authority.

It is not to be imagined, that they, whom the Apostles themselves, instructed in the doctrines of Christianity, should so far mistake them, as to adopt erroneous notions of

the great object of their worship, and relapse into idolatry, as guilty and as monstrous, as that from which they had been so lately reclaimed. I say both reason and candour must reject such an idea, and therefore it remains only to be proved, that the practice of the first Christians evidently evinces their belief of Christ's divinity.

A very slight acquaintance with ecclesiastical antiquity must convince us that the doctrine of Christ's divinity prevailed in the Christian Church, as far back as we can trace the history of her tenets. It must, indeed, be acknowledged, that in the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles, the materials for Church history are scanty and obscure. The few fragments of Hegesippus preserved by Eusebius, are almost the only authentic monuments of a Christian historian, which have reached us. But no sooner were regular histories written to record the doctrines and dissensions of Christians, than this primitive tenet appears firmly established and adopted by a vast majority in the Church.

It has been already observed, that the very first proselytes to Christianity, regarded Jesus Christ as an object of their worship; and we know from the writings of the Apostles, that they acted conformably to this belief. St. Paul, writing to the Romans,* speaks of the absolute necessity of confessing "the Lord Jesus;" a little after,† he says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "How then," continues he, "Shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Here the Apostle plainly intimates the necessity of calling on the *Lord Jesus*, or in other words of paying religious worship to his name. And accordingly we find Stephen,‡ in the agonies of death, calling upon the Lord Jesus, *whom he saw standing at the right hand of God*, "And praying him to receive his spirit." It has been already observed that no history exists, to re-

* Rom. chap. xv. 9.

† v. 13, 14.

‡ Acts, i. 59.

cord the religious practices of the first Christians, subsequent to the Apostolic Epistles, and the writings of St. John, in which this doctrine of Christ's divinity appears clearly announced. We may gather, however, from the conduct of the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem, revealed to this Apostle, and recorded by his own pen, what worship was paid to Christ by the Christian Church upon earth. In the most august representation of celestial objects, with which mortal man has been ever favoured, this beloved disciple saw the worship of his Master blended with that of the most High God. "After this," says he,* "I beheld, and lo, ■ great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and *before the Lamb*, and cried with ■ loud voice, salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and *unto the Lamb*." And when immediately afterwards the angels "fell before the throne upon their faces, and worshipped God,"† we are informed, that the "*Lamb is in the midst of the throne*."‡ And thus is the idea of that intimate connexion between the Father and the Son still supported by this wonderful revelation, which is so often inculcated in every other part of the New Testament.

From these divine attributes and prerogatives, so repeatedly ascribed to Christ, by his Apostles, we may easily infer the practice of their immediate disciples. And indeed it is a favourable circumstance to this Christian tenet, that the most sceptical inquirer can have ample evidence in this particular; and what is still more satisfactory, this evidence is drawn not only from the few writings now extant of the primitive Christians, but from the testimony also of every pagan writer who has recorded either their tenets or practice.

In the long list of writers who have deemed Christ's di-

* Rev. chap. vii. 9, 10,

† Ibid. vii. 11.

‡ Ibid. vii. 17.

vinity incompatible with the unity of God, the name of Dr. Priestly is certainly the most conspicuous; a genius indefatigable in extending the limits of human knowledge; and successful in vindicating the dearest interests of man. To a lover of wisdom, moderation, and liberty, to an admirer of great and wonderful abilities, it must be painful to discover a dark shade amidst the splendours of so refulgent a phenomenon. But in religious inquiries, the fascination of no great name should turn us aside from the only sources of truth. The Doctor, no doubt, had recourse to these sources. To him they seemed to exhibit no proofs of Christ's divinity, and therefore he rejects this tenet, and maintains that Jesus was a *mere man*. He proceeds yet farther, and strenuously contends, "that from ecclesiastical history, there is sufficient evidence of the same thing."* As the second part of the argument alleged in the beginning of this letter, rests upon the ancient Christians worshipping Christ as God, this assertion of the Doctor must be refuted, or the argument falls immediately to the ground.

The Doctor laments that a few scanty fragments of Hege-sippus, a Jewish Christian, who travelled to Rome about the year 160, and wrote the history of the Church in continuation of the Acts of the Apostles, are the only remains of Church history at this early period. Fortunately, however, some other documents of these times have reached us, which the best critics have ever regarded as authentic, that place the Doctor's assertion in a very unfavourable light. I shall borrow but a few arguments from the respectable stock of authority which evinced the belief of Christ's divinity by the immediate and most illustrious successors of the Apostles. And, in the first place, the authority of Hege-sippus himself, puts this matter beyond a doubt; although the Doctor asserts (I believe from mere conjecture) that he had been taught the Unitarian doctrine.† From the si-

* History of opinions concerning Christ, page 6.

† Ibid. p. 8.

lence of this writer respecting the Ebionites and the Nazarenes, who maintained the *proper humanity* of Christ, he infers that this must have been his own belief; not recollecting, probably, that a few fragments only of this ancient writer are preserved; and that consequently a negative argument drawn from his silence must be very weak and indecisive. It was during the pontificate of Anicetus, Bishop of Rome, who succeeded Pius in the twentieth year of the Emperor Antoninus, and 157 after Christ, that Hegesippus arrived in that metropolis, where he wrote his history, in which he traces the doctrine of the Apostles down to that time, and bears ample testimony to its uninterrupted purity among the Christians at Rome.* Now it is evident, that long before the time of Anicetus, the doctrine of Christ's divinity was believed and taught in the Roman Church.

In the year of Christ 91, and the tenth of the Emperor Domitian, Clemens was elected Bishop of Rome. He was the third from the Apostle St. Peter, and is universally admitted to have written the celebrated "Letter from the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth." This letter has ever passed for the most precious monument of Church history since the Holy Scriptures.† Now in this epistle, Clemens makes special mention of the *sufferings of God*.‡ This must have been therefore the faith of Rome in 97, when this epistle was written, and which Hegesippus found unimpaired, when sixty years after he arrived in that city. The doctor very justly observes,§ that almost all the ancient writers who describe the heretics of the two first centuries say, that they were of two kinds. The first taught that Christ was a man only in appearance; the others that he was a mere man. This latter opinion, the doctor maintains to be the "plain simple truth of the Gospel:" which he says, "may be clearly inferred from the Apostle John

* Eus. c. 11, p. 125.

† See Till. p. 284. tom. ii. Prem. Partie.

‡ Clem. 1 Cor. c. 2. p. 92.

§ Page 9.

taking no notice at all of it, though he censures the former opinion, which taught Christ to be man only in appearance, in the severest manner.”* And yet, if the most respectable writers of antiquity may be credited, St. John and the other Apostles were particularly severe against these first abettors of the Unitarian doctrine. Ireneus, who lived immediately after the apostolic age, tells us,† that St. John wrote his gospel, partly to refute the heresy of Cerinthus, who, it is well known, was among the first that denied the divinity of Christ.‡ The Nazarenes and the Ebionites professed the same doctrine respecting the Redeemer, and brought on themselves a similar condemnation. Ebion was probably the disciple of Cerinthus, and it was, says Hierom,§ against their heresy, that St. John wrote his gospel. These ancient Unitarians were far from agreeing in their opinions concerning Christ,|| and if any person will be at the pains of investigating their doctrines amidst the chaos that surrounds them, he will discover such notorious absurdities attributed to them by every ancient writer, (some of whom are highly eminent for their abilities and accuracy,) that he would scarcely own them as the chosen depositaries of the *plain and simple truth* of the gospel.¶ Thus have we respectable authority for asserting that the censures of the Apostles fell upon Cerinthus, Ebion, and the other Unitarians of their time. Ireneus tells us, that St. John finding Cerinthus in a bath into which he was entering, immediately left him with horror on account of his heresy, and another ancient author assures us, “*that he was declared an heretic and excommunicated by the Apostles.*”** Now whether these facts be real or not, they serve however to evince the opinion of the most ancient and respectable Christian writers concerning these men and their doctrines. Among

* Page 10. † l. 3. c. ii. p. 257. ‡ Vide Theodoret, hæc. 1 part. p. 188.
 § Hier. v. il. 9. || Orig. in Cels. l. 5. p. 272. Vide Theodoret, Ireneus, Hierom, Epiphanius, &c. &c. ¶ Philasto. c. 6. p. 15. ** Philasto. c. 6. p. 15.

most eminent martyrs of the primitive age, are Ignatius and Polycarp. The first was Bishop of Antioch, and suffered martyrdom at Rome, under the Emperor Trajan, in the year of Christ 107. The acts, or history of this ancient martyr, were written by his disciples who accompanied him from Asia to Rome. These are, after the Holy Scriptures, the most ancient piece of Church history, and carry with them every intrinsic mark of venerable authenticity. They were published by Archbishop Usher, and are proved to be genuine by the judicious Tillemont.*

Theodoret† and Chrysostom‡ inform us, that Ignatius was consecrated Bishop of Antioch by the Apostles themselves. At any rate, he was certainly cotemporary with them; and the doctrine of his day must be of the highest authority. When this venerable martyr was brought into the presence of the Emperor Trajan, that prince said to him, "Art thou the person, who, like an evil demon, takest pleasure in disobeying our orders, and in persuading others to their ruin?" Ignatius answered, "No man calls Theophorus an evil demon. For the demons fly before the servants of God. If you call me an evil demon, because I am hateful and insupportable to them, I confess that I deserve that name; because, possessing Jesus Christ, who is the great King exalted above the heavens, I set at nought all their snares and their efforts." "Trajan asked him, who is Theophorus? (or one who *carries God* within him.)" "Ignatius answered, it is he who carries Jesus Christ in his heart." Here is an express acknowledgment of Christ's divinity by a disciple of the Apostles, on a most solemn occasion, and in words as explicit as language can adopt. Was this the profession of an Unitarian, or did this holy martyr, the disciple of the Apostles, so soon forget, or so scandalously betray the doctrine of his masters? Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, lived at the same time with Ignatius,

* P. 2d. page 50.

† Theod. dial. 1. p. 33.

‡ Orat. 42. p. 504.

collected his letters, professed the same faith, and sealed it with his blood. His history is received as authentic by Usher, and almost every other eminent critic. When Ignatius was carried prisoner to Rome, he was taken through Smyrna, and there paid a visit to Polycarp, his ancient school-fellow in the school of St. John. Writing afterwards to this church, he says,* “I once more glorify Jesus Christ *our God*, for the wisdom he hath shed upon the flock of this holy pastor.” “When brought before the proconsul, and importuned to save his life by styling the emperor Lord, (*dominum*,) Polycarp refused to do it,” conceiving it to be a title belonging to *God*, as Tertullian observes,† and yet is this appellation repeatedly attributed by every ancient Christian to Jesus Christ. After his death, say his acts,‡ “The anniversary of his death was observed to commemorate his memory, who had fought for Jesus Christ, and that others might thereby be exhorted to martyrdom; but not to adore him in lieu of Jesus Christ—for we can never abandon Jesus Christ, whom we *adore*, because he is the Son of God.” I have now run over some of the most authentic and venerable monuments of the first age of the Church; many others might as easily be produced. In none will the Unitarian doctrine find any countenance. The more these ancient writings are considered, the more we shall be convinced that the immediate successors of the Apostles, worshipped and adored the Saviour of the world.

I cannot dismiss this part of my argument, without adverting to one very respectable authority, on which particular stress is laid by the doctor. I own, indeed, that I was somewhat surprised to find Justin Martyr cited, in any shape, as a favourable witness to the Unitarian doctrine.§ This ancient doctor and martyr, being the first gentile writer who published an apology for the Christian religion,

* Ign. ad. Smyr. p. 33.

† Apol. c. 34. p. 31.

‡ P. 27.

§ He has ever been deemed, both by the ancient and modern Socinians, their professed adversary.

and living so soon after the age of the Apostles, has ever possessed very high and deserved authority in the Christian Church. He suffered martyrdom at Rome, about the year 167, in the reign of the Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. His celebrated apology for the Christian religion was addressed to the philosophic emperor, Marcus Antoninus, and must have conveyed the genuine doctrine of Christianity at that day. And yet, says the doctor,* in Justin's dialogue with Tryphon the Jew, speaking of Christ's pre-existence, "His language is not that of a man very confident of his opinion, and who had the sanction of the majority along with him."† The passage which the doctor alludes to, is this: "Jesus," says Justin, "may still be the Christ of God, though I should not be able to prove his pre-existence. For though I should not prove that he had pre-existed, it will be right to say in this respect only, I have been deceived," &c. Does this language argue any want of conviction respecting Christ's pre-existence? Is it not a very common mode of reasoning, and highly proper on the occasion? Justin was arguing with a learned Jew, to whom it was necessary to prove that Christ was the Messiah. This was the first step towards his conversion to Christianity. Like his countrymen, during Jesus' mission, perhaps Tryphon was not capable of bearing more of the truth at that time, and therefore Justin, in imitation of his divine Master and the Apostles, deemed it prudent to wave the discussion of Christ's divinity, till he had previously shown him to be the Messiah. Another passage of Justin‡ appears to me as misrepresented by the doctor. "There are some," says he, "of our profession, who acknowledge Jesus to be the Christ, yet maintain that he was a man, a man born of man. I do not agree with them, nor should I be prevailed upon by ever so many who hold that opinion, because we are taught by Christ himself, not to receive our

* P. 18.

† Dial. Edit. Thirlby. P. 225.

‡ Ibid. p. 235.

doctrine from men, but from what was taught by the holy Prophets, and by himself.” The doctor refers this passage to the Unitarians of that period, who believed Christ to be the son of Joseph, and were, notwithstanding, deemed orthodox by Justin. But how will he make it appear that these words relate to any Unitarians whatever? Nothing in this dialogue authorizes such a conjecture. For it is certain that Christ might have been the son of Joseph as well as of Mary, and still, as to his divine nature, could have been equally God. The Christians, therefore, whom Justin mentions as differing from him respecting Christ’s natural birth, might still agree with him respecting his divinity. As the doctor allows Justin to be an open advocate for the divine nature of Christ, it will not be necessary to dwell much longer on his authority. However, it may not be improper to remark, that in this very dialogue, in which the doctor tells us he speaks with such diffidence of Christ’s pre-existence, we find the following profession of his belief. “Wherefore,” says he,* “we not only revere and *adore* God the Father of Justice, and of all other virtues, but also his Son, who came to teach us the truth; and the Spirit, who spoke by the prophets; we pay them true and rational honour; we teach these things to those who wish to be instructed, with the same openness and freedom, with which we ourselves have been instructed in them.”

In a word, the open profession of faith, made before the prefect of the city Rusticus, by this venerable martyr, contains a compendium of all that might be alleged from his great authority. “The truth,” says he, in answer to the prefect’s question, “which Christians venerate with every sentiment of respect, is to believe that there is one God, who created all things, both visible and invisible; to confess our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, announced

* Dial. p. 56.

long before the coming of the prophets, who must come one day to judge all men; who is the Saviour, the Preacher, and the Master of those who are his real disciples. I am cautious, being what I am, of hazarding any expressions adequate to his *infinite grandeur and divinity*. This is a subject far beyond my power and abilities," &c.* When Doctor Priestly, or other advocates for the Unitarian doctrine, shall produce from any writer, whose authority has been equally respected by the Christian Church, a passage so explicit to support their opinions, it will then be time enough for a sincere inquirer to begin to encourage doubts of the ancient faith in this particular. As to what the doctor alleges respecting the pretensions of the Unitarians to apostolical authority, without more positive proofs, it must fall to the ground; besides it would be extraordinary indeed, if the first abettors of any tenet in religion, should forget to take shelter under the sanction of its first teachers.

It now remains only to be shown, that the testimony of the Pagan writers is equally conclusive respecting the divine worship paid to Christ, by the primitive Christians. A few unexceptionable passages from some of the principal among them, will be sufficient for this purpose, and will complete the second part of the argument mentioned in the beginning of this letter. Pliny the younger, while proconsul of Bithynia, and Pontus, finding in those provinces a great number of Christians, wrote a letter, still extant, to the Emperor Trajan, consulting him on the mode of his conduct towards them. He tells the emperor, "That being interrogated, they who complied with his order to sacrifice, affirmed the whole of their guilt, or error, was, to meet on a certain particular day, before it was light, and to address themselves in a form of prayer to Christ, as to some God," &c. &c. Here these apostates,

* Act. Jus. Sec. 2.

who had, probably, but a slender knowledge of Christianity, confess, however, that divine worship was paid to Jesus Christ. In this they could not be mistaken, although very ignorant of the unity of the Godhead.

Antoninus Pius, successor to Adrian, in an edict directed to the states of Asia, tells them, that "It is more eligible with them (Christians) to be persecuted and die *for their God*, than to continue in life." Soon after, he says, "As to earthquakes, past or present, it may not be amiss to admonish you who are desponding, whenever they happen, to compare your own conduct with theirs. On such occasions, they place their confidence firmly in their God. He censures them moreover for not *worshipping the Eternal, and for persecuting the Christians who do worship Him*." Thus distinguishing between the eternal and the particular God of the Christians, whom he did not know to be but one only God.

Lucian, in his history of Peregrinus, the philosopher, after relating many particulars concerning him, mentions his becoming an eminent professor among the Christians, who, says he, "*Adore that great Person who had been crucified in Palestine, as being the first that taught men that religion*." And again, "Since they separated from us, they persevere in rejecting the gods of the Grecians, and *worshipping only that deceiver who was crucified*." In these words does Lucian bear testimony to the *perpetual* worship of Christ among Christians, from their first origin down to his time. Porphyry, whom St. Austin calls the ablest of the philosophers, composed a work against the Christian religion, divided into fifteen books, which the Heathens looked upon as a divine performance. In it, he relates, that a certain person who had asked Apollo what God he must apply to, in order to make his wife relinquish Christianity, received this answer from him: "It would perhaps be easier for you to write upon water, or to fly in the air, than to reclaim the spirit of your impious spouse; leave

her, therefore, in her ridiculous error, to hymn in a faint and mournful voice, the *dead God*, who was publicly condemned to a cruel punishment, by judges of singular wisdom." During a cruel pestilence, which ravaged the empire, in the reign of Gallienus, Porphyry expresses himself thus respecting that calamity: "Are men surprised that Rome has been afflicted with a plague for so many years, when *Æsculapius* and the other gods have abandoned us? and since *Jesus has been worshipped*, no one has experienced the public assistance of the gods."* To conclude this body of Pagan evidence, which might easily be increased to a great extent. The Emperor Julian, who was educated a Christian, when he afterwards became a most subtle and powerful persecutor, composed a work against the Christian religion, in which, among a variety of other calumnies, "He reproaches the Christians for worshipping two Gods, contrary to the express command of Moses."† Julian was slain in the year 363, in a battle against the Persians. With him fell idolatry; and Christianity became the religion of the Roman empire and its sovereigns. Thus, my friend, have I endeavoured briefly to trace this important tenet, from the first promulgation of the Christian system, to the downfall of Paganism. I have shown that it was taught by Christ's own Apostles, and their immediate successors; that the adversaries of this doctrine were regarded as heretics by the brightest luminaries of the primitive Church; and that the practice of the ancient Christians, whenever it is mentioned by cotemporary Pagan writers, bears additional and solid testimony in its favour against them. Nothing further remains to be said upon this subject, in order to fix our ideas and belief, but to consider, whether the weight of evidence alleged for this doctrine, or the inconvenience of its apparent contradictions and difficulties, ought to preponderate on an impartial mind, which has previously admitted the

* See passages from his work in Greg. Naz., Euseb., Theodoret, Jerom, Cyril, Austin.

† Cyril adv. Jul.

books of the New Testament to be the word of God. I must candidly acknowledge that those difficulties are great and perplexing; that many passages in the New Testament appear to co-operate with reason, in proving some degree of inferiority in Jesus Christ; that the system adopted by a late very ingenious writer* seems exceedingly plausible, not to say sublime and admirably consistent. I must confess moreover, that I can see no answer to his arguments but such as rest on the facts contained in this letter. If these be once established; that is, if it be a fact, that Christ's Apostles did teach that he is God, by admitting their authority, we admit the fact; if it can be shown that their immediate successors believed and worshipped him as a divine person, we must conceive him such, or conclude that they were wrong; and that consequently the Christian dispensation failed in the very outset of its principal design, which was to bring *mankind to the worship of the living God*. Would not assertions of this kind be more unreasonable, than to admit that Dr. Priestly, Mr. Purves, and others, have not been able to penetrate this wonderful mystery; that the contradictions they allege are not real, and that they have certainly been mistaken in their several opinions?

With the exception of Dr. Priestly only, I have not entered the lists of controversy with any other opponent to this doctrine: much less will it be expected that I should take any notice of the flimsy, though fashionable philosophers of the European continent. Meteors, which dazzle for a moment, by a glittering display of fascinating declamation, but vanishing as quickly into the airy regions of fiction, from whence they originated. From writers of this cast, the Christian religion has little to apprehend, especially in America. Neither the harmony of well turned periods, nor the affected glow of false philanthropy, will

* Mr. Purves, who admits the pre-existence of Christ, and ascribes every attribute to him short of infinite perfection in its utmost latitude of meaning.

ever usurp the empire of sound and masculine reason, among a people accustomed to argue for themselves: and I trust, that a nation, in whose cause Divine Providence has shone so eminently conspicuous, will never be persuaded, either by the pompous erudition of a Diderot, the warm and unbridled fancy of a Raynal, or the cynical sneers of a Voltaire, to detach the idea of civil and religious liberty from a perfect dependance on the Great Creator.

With every sentiment of esteem and affection,
I remain, Dear Sir, your sincere Friend,
And humble servant,

CHARLES HENRY WHARTON.

Prospect Hill, March 31, 1791.

BAPTISM.

THE Antipædobaptists hold, that believing adults only are proper subjects of baptism, because Christ's commission to baptize restricted this ordinance to such only as are taught, or made *disciples*; and that consequently, infants, who cannot be thus taught, are to be excluded. It does not appear, they say, that the Apostles, in executing Christ's commission, ever baptized any but those who were first instructed in the Christian faith, and professed their belief of it. They contend, that infants can receive no benefit from it, as not being capable of faith and repentance, which are to be considered as pre-requisites.

As to the mode, they believe that the meaning of the word βαπτίζω signifies immersion, or dipping only; that John baptized in Jordan, that he chose a place where there was much water; that Philip and the Ethiopian went down both into the water. That the terms washing, purifying, burying in baptism, so often mentioned in Scripture, allude to this mode; that immersion only was the practice of the Apostles and the first Christians, and that it was only laid aside from the love of novelty, and the coldness of our climate. These positions, they think, are so clear from Scripture, and the history of the Church, that they stand in need but of little argument to support them. Further, they also insist that all positive institutions depend entirely upon the will and declaration of the institutor, and that, therefore, reasoning by analogy, from previous abrogated rites is to be rejected, and the express command of Christ respecting baptism ought to be our rule.

The *Pædobaptists* are, however, of a very different opinion. As to the *subject, that is*, they believe that qualified adults, who have not been baptized before, are certainly proper subjects; but then they think also, that infants are not to be excluded. They believe, that as the covenant with Abraham and the Christian are the same;* that as children were admitted under the former; and that as baptism is now a seal, sign, or confirmation of this covenant, infants have as great a right to it, as children had to the right of circumcision under the law.† That if children are not to be baptized because there is no positive command for it, for the same reason women should not come to the Lord's Supper; we should not keep the first day of the week, nor attend public worship, for none of these are expressly commanded; that if infant baptism had been a human invention, how would it have been so universal in the first three hundred years, and yet no record left when it was introduced, nor any dispute, nor controversy about it. Some reduce it to these two ideas: *First*, that God did constitute in his Church the membership of infants, and admitted them to it by a religious ordinance:‡ *Second*, that this right to church membership was never taken away. This being the case, infants must be received, because God has instituted it; and, since infants must be received, it must be either *without* baptism, or *with* it; but none must be received without baptism, therefore infants must of necessity be baptized. Hence it is clear, that under the Gospel, infants are still continued in the same relation to God and his Church, in which they were originally placed under the former dispensation. That infants are to be received into the Church, and as such baptized, is also inferred from the following Scriptures:—Gen. xvii.; Isaiah xlv. 3; Matt. xix. 13; Luke ix. 47–48; Mark ix. 14; Acts ii. 38–39; Rom. xi. 17, 21; 1 Cor. vii. 14.

* Gen. xvii. 7. Heb. viii. 12.

† Acts ii. 39. Rom. iv. 11.

‡ Gen. xvii. Gal. iii. 14–17.

Though there are no express examples in the New Testament of Christ and his Apostles baptizing infants, yet this is no proof that they were excluded. Jesus Christ actually blessed little children; and it would be hard to believe that such received his blessing, without being then in a capacity of becoming members of the Gospel Church. If Christ received them, and would have us receive them in his hands, how can *this* be reconciled with keeping them out of the visible Church? Besides, if children were not to be baptized, it would have been expressly forbidden. None of the Jews had any apprehension of the rejection of infants, which they must have had if infants had been rejected. As whole households were baptized, it is probable there were children among them. Again, from the year 400 to 1150, no society of men, in all that period, 750 years, ever pretended to say it was unlawful to baptize infants; and still nearer the time of our Saviour there appears to have been scarcely any one that so much as advised the delay of infant baptism. *Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, who lived in the second century, and was well acquainted with Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who was St. John's disciple, declares expressly, that "the Church learned from the Apostles to baptize children."* Origen, in the third century, affirmed, that "*the custom of baptizing infants was received from Christ and his Apostles.*" Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, and a council of Bishops, (held about the year 254,) no less than sixty-six in number, unanimously agreed, that children might be baptized as soon as they were born. St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, who wrote about 274 years from the Apostles, declares, that the baptism of infants had been the practice of the Apostles themselves, and of the Church till that time. The Catholic Church every where declared, says St. Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople, in the fifth century, that infants should be baptized: and St. Austin, Bishop of Hippo, in the same century, affirmed, that he never heard, or read, of any Christian, Catholic or Secta-

rian, but who always held that infants were to be baptized. Pædobaptists farther believe, that there needed no mention in the New Testament of receiving infants into the Church, as it had been once appointed and never repealed. The dictates of nature also, in parental feelings; the verdict of reason in favour of privileges; the evidence in favour of children being sharers in the seals of grace, in common with their parents, for the space of four thousand years; and especially the language of prophecy, in reference to the children of the Gospel Church, make it very probable that they were not to be rejected. So far from confining it to adults, it must be remembered that there is not a single instance recorded in the New Testament, in which the descendants of Christian parents were baptized in adult years. That infants are not proper subjects for baptism, because they cannot profess and repent, Pædobaptists deny. This objection falls with as much weight upon the institution of circumcision as infant baptism; since they are as capable, or as fit subjects for the one as the other. It is generally acknowledged that if infants die (and a great part of the human race do die in infancy,) before they are baptized, they are saved: if this be the case, then why refuse them the *sign* in infancy, if they are capable of enjoying the thing signified? But, say they, something is said of baptism, that cannot be applied to infants.* “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.” If so, then infants must not be saved, because something is said of *salvation* which cannot be applied to infants.† For as none but adults are capable of believing, so, by the arguments of the Baptists, none but adults are capable of salvation: for “he that believeth not, shall be damned.” But Christ, it is said, set an example of adult baptism; true, but he was baptized to do honour to John’s ministry, and to conform himself to what he ap-

* Mark xvi. 16.

† Same text.

pointed to his followers ; for which reason also, he drank of the sacramental cup : but this is rather an argument for the Pædobaptists than against them ; since it plainly shows, as Dr. Doddridge observes, that baptism may be administered to those who are capable of all the purposes for which it was designed ; since Jesus Christ, not being a sinner, could not be capable of that faith and repentance which are said to be necessary to this ordinance.

As to the *advantages* attending infant baptism, if it be asked what they are, or what profit *there is of it*, we may answer with the Apostle,* “ *much every way.*” If the visible Church of Christ be represented as the depository of God’s special promises, the keeper of his sacred oracles and covenant through Christ ; if it be frequently compared with Noah’s ark, and all its members be placed in a state of salvation, and furnished with abundant means for obtaining it ; is it, can we think, a matter of small importance that infants should be admitted into this Church, and thus become entitled to the invaluable privileges of the Christian covenant, of which baptism is generally allowed to be the sign and the seal ? If the outward visible Church of Christ be styled his mystical body, and his spouse, is it no blessing, no advantage, to be a member of the one, and a child of the other ? Is there no profit of being translated out of a natural into a salvable state ? Is there no advantage in a title to covenanted mercy, to Christian discipleship ? There is no doubt upon my mind respecting unbaptized children dying in infancy. Without actual guilt there can be no punishment. It would be inconsistent with God’s justice as well as his merey. Yet such has been the perplexity occasioned by Christ’s express declaration, that no person can enter into the kingdom of God, unless born again of water and of the Spirit, that eminent divines have doomed the deceased unbaptized children of wicked and unbelieving pa-

* Rom. iii. 2.

rents to annihilation. To pronounce them to be saved, seemed contrary to God's word; to adjudge them to punishment seemed contrary to his justice. They therefore conceived that they were not to exist at all. Of this opinion, apparently so unfounded and absurd, was the famous Dr. Watts. But it will be said, if all who die in infancy are to be saved, of what profit can baptism be to them? "In my Father's house," says Christ, "there are many mansions;" and in the resurrection of the dead, "one star," says the Apostle, "differeth from another star in glory." May not, then, baptized infants, dying in infancy, be admitted to superior degrees of happiness and glory appropriated to the covenanted members of Christ's mystical body, which are denied to the objects of uncovenanted mercy? Is there any contradiction, any inconsistency in the free will of God making such a discrimination? Or can *they* object to it, who maintain that this free will elects and predestinates *unconditionally*, a determinate number of human beings to everlasting happiness, and a determinate number of others to everlasting reprobation and perdition? Of the two opinions, the former appears by far the most probable; and I appeal to parental feelings, whether they do not omit a material branch of parental duty by neglecting or omitting any probable means of securing and promoting the happiness of their offspring throughout eternity.

Moreover, the baptism of the infant offspring of Christian parents, is a solemn declaration, that they desire the same blessings for their children, as they have obtained from their Christian church membership; and they thus solemnly pledge themselves to the Church, "to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," giving them every instruction, and using all means of rendering them wise unto salvation. I say, when parents bring their children to be baptized, they virtually renew their own baptismal profession and engagements, and declare their persevering purpose of instructing and commanding their house-

holds in the fear of God. When a serious parent, therefore, is persuaded (notwithstanding the abuses which may have arisen from a too indiscriminate administration of infant baptism,) that it manifestly accords with the Word of God, and accordingly in compliance with what he judges his duty, presents his children to be baptized, he avows his earnest desires and belief that the covenant made with him may be for the good of his offspring also; and he engages to bring them up in the faith and obedience of the Gospel, as far as his instructions, discourse, example, and prayers, can have any influence. As they grow up, parents may profitably explain to them the nature, meaning, and engagements of baptism; the blessings which it signifies,—the advantages of being thus early admitted into the visible Church, and trained up as her children, and the aggravated guilt of deliberately rejecting the salvation and service of God, from pride of heart and carnal affections, or even of neglecting the means of appropriating these advantages, and complying with those engagements, which their parents or sureties had entered into in their name, and for their benefit. Thus an additional avenue is opened to the consciences of young persons, and an additional restraint imposed on their passions; and if baptism were always administered solemnly before the congregation, and proper instructions frequently delivered at those seasons, the most diffusive benefits might naturally be expected. Besides, the administration of infant baptism, has great influence in giving vast multitudes some ideas of the Gospel, especially of original sin, regeneration, and the Trinity; and while all who act profanely, deceitfully, or formally, in this matter, must answer for their own crimes, if good be done either to parents, children, or others, and if the name of God be in any measure glorified, the end of the institution is so far answered, even though no special benefit should be thought to accrue to the baptized person. But this can never be the idea of the mem-

bers of our Church, as I observed above, and to them are these reflections principally addressed.

The outward sign doubtless will not profit those who live and die without "the inward and spiritual grace," even "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness," and the conduct of multitudes, who act in direct opposition to the most solemn engagements entered into for themselves or others, will render their doom more dreadful at the last day, than that of Jews, Mahometans, Pagans, or avowed infidels.

They of our Church, who believe that by baptism infants are made "the members of Christ, the children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven," will cease, of course, to question the benefits of this ordinance; and others, I am persuaded, who will bestow on this subject becoming attention, will be led to doubt the propriety and innocency of omitting an institution which men of great wisdom and piety conceive to be commanded in the Word of God, and which has been undoubtedly sanctioned through every age of the Church by the great body of the faithful. I will conclude with the words of the Rev. Mr. Scott, a learned and pious writer, of great authority among all denominations of Christians. "After a long and patient investigation," says he, speaking of himself, "and mature investigation, the writer is a Pædobaptist. But he considers all as brethren, 'who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity;' and would not willingly offend any man, who conscientiously differs from him in such matters; he therefore reasonably hopes for similar candour. The disputes about the *mode* and subjects of baptism, seem to have too long occupied a *disproportionate* degree of attention, whilst numbers remain ignorant of the nature and obligations of the ordinance itself. Mr. Henry's observation seems well grounded, 'if infant baptism were more conscientiously improved, it would be less disputed.'"

We now proceed to the *mode* of *baptizing*, and may observe, *first*, that the Greek word βαπτω (bapto) signifies to

dip, or plunge; but that the term βαπτίζω, (baptizo,) which is only a derivative of βάπτω, and consequently must be somewhat less in its signification, should be invariably used in the New Testament to express plunging, is not so clear. It is therefore doubted, whether *dipping* be the *only* meaning, and whether Christ absolutely enjoined immersion, and that it is his positive will that no other should be used. As to the word βαπτίζω, it is used for the various ablutions among the Jews, such as sprinkling, pouring, &c.;* for the custom of washing before meals, and the washing of household furniture, pots, &c. It is therefore evident from hence, that it does not express the *manner of doing*, whether by immersion or affusion, but only the thing done; that is washing, or the application of water in some form or other. Dr. Owen observes, that it no where signifies to *dip*, but as denoting a mode of, and in order to, washing or cleansing; and according to others, the mode of use is only the ceremonial part of a positive institution; just as in the Lord's Supper the *time of day*, the *number* and *posture* of communicants, the *quality* and *quantity* of bread and wine, are circumstances not accounted essential by any party of Christians. As to the Hebrew word *Tabal*, it is considered as a *generic term*, for its radical, primary, and proper meaning is, to *tinge*, to *dye*, to *wet*, or the like; which primary design is effected by different modes of application. Besides, if in baptism there be an expressive emblem of the descending influence of the Spirit, *pouring* must be the mode of administration; for that is the scriptural term most commonly and properly used for the communication of divine influences. There is no object whatever in all the New Testament so frequently and so explicitly signified by baptism, as these divine influences.† The term *sprinkling* also is made use of in reference to the act of purify-

* Heb. ix. 10. † Matt. iii. 11. Mark i. 8, 10. Luke iii. 16 to 22. John i. 33. Acts i. 5. Acts ii. 38, 39. Acts viii. 12-17. Acts xi. 15, 16.

ing;* and, therefore, cannot be inapplicable to baptismal purification. But, say the Antipædobaptists, John baptized *in Jordan*; to which it is replied, that to infer always a plunging of the whole body in water from this word, would in many instances be false and absurd. The same Greek preposition *εν* is used when it is said they should be baptized *with* fire, but few will assert that they should be plunged into it. The Apostle, speaking Christ, says, “he came not by (*εν*) water only, but by (*εν*) water and blood. There the same word, *εν*, is translated *by*; and with justice and propriety, for we know no good sense in which we could say, “he came *in* water.” It has been remarked that *εν* is more than one hundred times, in the New Testament, rendered *at*, and in one hundred and fifty others it is translated *with*. If it be rendered so in this place, “John baptized *at* Jordan,” or with the water of Jordan, there is no proof from thence that he plunged his disciples in it. But it is urged farther, that by John’s choosing a place where there was *much water*, a certain proof is given of immersion. To which it is answered, that, as there went out to him “Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan,” by choosing a place where there were many streams, or rivulets, it would be much more readily performed by pouring; and that it seems in the nature of things highly improbable that John should have baptized this vast multitude by immersion; to say nothing of the indecency of baptizing men and women together in this manner. Jesus, it is said, came up *out of* the water; but this is no proof of his having been immersed, as the Greek word *απο* often signifies *from*; for instance, “who hath warned you to flee *from*, (*απο*), not *out of*, the wrath to come,” with many others that might be mentioned. Again, it is said, that Philip and the Eunuch went down both *into the water*. To this it is answered, that here is no proof of *immersion*; for if the expression of their

* Is. lii. 15. Heb. ix. 13, 14. Ezekiel xxxvi. 25.

going down into the water necessarily includes dipping, then Philip was dipped as well as his proselyte. The preposition (*us*) translated *into*, often signifies no more than *to*, *unto*, or *towards*.* So that, from all these circumstances, it cannot be concluded, that there was a single person of all the baptized, who went into the water ankle deep. As to the Apostle's expression, "buried with him in baptism," we think it has no force, and that it does not allude to any custom of dipping, any more than our baptismal crucifixion and death has any such reference. It is not the sign, but the thing signified that is here alluded to. As Christ was buried and rose again to a heavenly life, so we by baptism signify that we are cut off from the life of sin, that we may rise again to a new life of faith and love. To conclude, we think that the mode of immersion seems to carry with it too much of the appearance of a burdensome rite for the Gospel dispensation; that it is not sufficiently decent for so solemn an ordinance; that it has a tendency to agitate the spirits; often rendering the subject unfit for the exercise of proper thoughts and affections, and indeed utterly incapable of them: that in many cases the immersion of the body in water would, in all probability, be instant death, and that in other situations it would be impracticable for want of water—for all which reasons, and many more, immersion cannot be considered as necessary to the ordinance of baptism.

I shall conclude what I have now to say upon this subject, by answering one or two of the principal objections which have been made against our particular mode of administering the sacrament of baptism. The first of these objections is, that we put questions to infants which they cannot possibly answer, and which, therefore, must be answered by others for them. This they scruple not to pronounce childish folly and profane mockery; but can they

* Matt. xv. 24. Rom. x. 10. Acts xxviii. 14. Matt. xvii. 27. Matt. iii. 11

show that the Church ever used a solemn form for infant baptism without these interrogatories? We have a case in point on this subject in ecclesiastical history.* Bonifacius, a Bishop cotemporary with St. Austin, knowing that the Church always proposed these questions at infant baptism, was anxious to learn from St. Austin the reason of this practice, and wrote to him accordingly in the following words: "If," says he, "I should set before you a young infant, and should ask you, whether that infant, when he comes to riper age, will be honest, just, or otherwise, you would answer, that it is not in the power of mortal man to foretell things of this nature. Now if you can neither promise for the time to come, nor for the present any thing in this case, how is it, that when such are brought unto baptism, that their parents shall there undertake what the child shall afterwards do?.....Vouchsafe me hereunto some short answer, such as not only may press me with the bare authority of custom, but also instruct me in the cause thereof." The practice of the Church was therefore universal, at this early period, and the reason for it is thus delivered by St. Austin: "Although," says he, "*a present actual habit of faith be not in them at this time*, yet because the habit must afterwards be formed by an explicit belief of the articles of the creed, the first foundation of this faith is laid by the sacrament of baptism. So that when we acknowledge, in riper years, what we profess in our infancy, we only bring to maturity the seed which was sown at that time. The sacrament of faith confers that grace upon infants, which adults derive from the faith of the sacrament." "Infants," he adds, "sanctified by the sacrament of Christ, and regenerated by the Holy Ghost, may belong to God's temple, though not of an age to know him. Now, if they be God's children, if sanctified by the Holy Ghost, why not express by others that belief in Christianity which places

* Aug. Epist. xxiii.

them in the first degree of their ghostly motion towards the actual habit of faith." "This," says the learned Father, "may not possibly satisfy such persons as are ignorant or captious; but to them who have knowledge and candour, it may suffice. I refrain from objecting to you the custom itself; than which, however, nothing is better established; but of this most profitable custom, I have done what little I could, to yield you a reason."

Another reason why these questions should be put to infants in baptism, and answered by their sponsors, is, that baptism implies a covenant, or stipulation between God and man, by which, as God engages to bestow the Holy Ghost on man, together with every grace that is necessary to the attainment of eternal life, so man binds himself to keep God's law, and to walk in the same all the days of his life. That infants may thus contract and covenant with God, is evident from Gen. xvii. 14, where express mention is made of a violation of the covenant entered into between God and infants by circumcision. Now, can it be imagined that this blessed privilege allowed in the old law to infants, should be denied to them in the new? No: this mighty benefit under the dispensation of mercy is extended to infants, and they are allowed to profess their faith by others, till more mature age induce them to appreciate so great a blessing, and to accept of it with a grateful and open profession of their faith. The sponsors of infants make these promises, in their name, reasonably presuming that they will afterwards gladly confirm them, and be sincerely thankful for so great a privilege, as having been admitted into the Christian covenant. But if, after competent instruction, children grow up, and continue unmindful of their baptismal vows, then can no blame attach to their sponsors. They have discharged their consciences by an act of high duty and singular mercy.

The signing of the *baptized person with the sign of the cross*, is another ceremony which has been objected to in

our baptismal service. It has been said, "that it is not proper to mingle the ceremonies and inventions of men with the sacraments and institutions of God." But do not they who make this objection, admit God-fathers and God-mothers at baptism, of which, however, there is no mention in Scripture? The fact is, when the Reformation took place in England, many other ceremonies were omitted which had long prevailed in the Church, with regard to baptism, and this only was retained after the most solemn deliberation; and, in order to prevent any superstitious notions being annexed to it, the words of the service expressly declare that it is used *only* as a sign of remembrance, as a token to remind us of our Christian profession. Whatever was deemed superstitious or superfluous, was laid aside by our venerable reformers, while some other things of high antiquity were retained, which while they were calculated to excite devotion, might at the same time reconcile prejudiced and pious minds, to the main and essential points of the Reformation. The sign of the cross in baptism is one of these usages. It is undoubtedly *a most ancient practice in the Church*, and is mentioned expressly by Tertullian and St. Cyprian, who lived within two centuries of the apostolic times. The first says, "the sign is impressed on the flesh, in order to fortify the soul." And the latter, among many other passages to the same purpose, exhorts his flock to arm *their foreheads* with all boldness when persecuted by the heathens; that the *sign of God may be preserved inviolable*. Many other reasons induced the fathers of our Church to retain this ceremony, as very significant and impressive; and no objection of sufficient weight, has hitherto been offered to induce the Church to reject what is sanctioned by the practice of at least sixteen centuries. At any rate, however, this ceremony is not considered to be very important, and our ministers are authorized to omit it, if the persons to be baptized have any scruples on the subject. It is not necessary, at present, to say any thing more on this subject, than

just to observe, that to profess a membership with our Church, without having been baptized, argues a palpable inconsistency, which it appears to be the duty of every reasonable person, and especially of every religious person, to avoid.

NOTE.

The reason why in the ancient Church we find no mention made of *affusion*, (for so it should be called, and not *sprinkling*,) is this. Immersion was generally the mode, but the Greek word means either one or the other, and it was deemed immaterial which was adopted. We find it recorded, however, at a very early period, that an infant, who was too ill to be immersed, was baptized by affusion, and his baptism was declared to be valid, and not to be repeated.

The Council of Florence, which was convened in order to effect an union between the Roman and Greek Churches, under Pope Innocent IV. about the year 1430, pronounced the Latins to be *Αβαπτιστες*, or *unbaptized*, because they were not immersed at baptism, a certain proof that such a practice did not prevail at that time. (See sec. ix. and chap. ix. of that Council.) Various proofs and instances of affusion in the primitive ages of the Church, are brought forward by the learned Vossius. *Disp. 1 de Bap. Thes. ix.*

THE END.

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